

**DISCOURSES OF LEARNING, TRANSITION AND AGENCY AMONGST STUDENTS WHO  
ATTENDED A CAPE TOWN HIGH SCHOOL UNDER APARTHEID**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the entirety of the work contained herein is my own original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how a group of students who attended a Cape Town High School between 1968 and 1990 navigated their schooling space and acquired various skills, knowledge and understandings to engage with the social world during and after leaving school. The learning experiences nurtured the students' critical thinking, agency, assertiveness, self-worth, self-esteem, respect, autonomy, and desire to exercise social justice, dignity, responsibility and citizenry.

I employ the works of Pierre Bourdieu to show how the students were not simply defined by their structures and contexts, but that they invariably acted back on the worlds they inhabited by employing a variety of understandings and meanings to navigate their schooling and other pathways into adulthood (Bourdieu, 1984). I also engage with the work of Paulo Freire to examine how the school's opened the eyes and minds of students to become more fully human by reflecting and acting upon the world in ways that transform it (Freire, 1978:26). I also use Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice to analyse how the school enables the students to overcome the social and racial barriers that inhibit them from participating on par with others and as full partners in their schooling and social interactions (Fraser, 2007).

Methodologically, the study is based on the qualitative paradigm. I did extensive interviews with fourteen students. I utilised the life history and life course techniques to locate the students as individuals in time and space, and to interpret their memories and perceptions in ways that bring fresh perspectives on how they internalise learning over their lifetimes. I also interviewed four teachers to get a broader understanding of how the school's ethos and pedagogical practices involve the students and promote their rationality and particular skills and world views. In particular the students observe that they are encouraged to participate and take responsibility positions in various activities such as debates, drama, films and sports that make them feel part of the learning process and make learning more meaningful, useful and transferrable.

The dissertation thus argues that when students are agents in their own learning, they are able to develop the ability to think critically, flexibly and strategically. It argues that connecting learning to students' contexts; dispositions and understandings enable them to

develop transposable capital to confidently acclimatise to their schooling, social circumstances, and challenges.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Stephen, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of this dissertation journey. His infinite love and support assisted me not only to believe in myself and my ability, but also enhanced my inquisitiveness, imagination and yearning for learning. I am truly thankful for having you in my life.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE STUDY

*Good schools do not blame students for their failures or strip students of the knowledges they bring to the classroom. (Freire, 1968)*

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of the learning that students experience in schools is ultimately what determines the people they become once they exit school. What they learn, and how they are taught this, firmly shapes how students understand their world and how they engage with it. Furthermore, it is the culture and operations of the schools they attend (culture and climate of school, classroom activities, kinds of curricula, teacher actions and instructional methods, and school-wide policies and standpoints) that influence their learning and experiences in ways that have broader implications for their future educational attainment, employment and family relations (Davis & Jordan, 1994:570). A key conjunct to the influences on students' learning experiences, is that each of these experiences play out in a specific historical time, operates within particular spatial locations, and is differently shaped by a given set of political, social and economic conditions.

This dissertation seeks to understand the role that schools during apartheid South Africa played in defining and shaping the learning experiences of students. To illuminate this, the dissertation focuses on one disadvantaged school, Victoria High (pseudonym) in Cape Town, which was designated for students defined as coloured under apartheid. It asks how its legacies of political activity, state resistance, politicised pedagogies and unwavering focus on educational excellence influenced the ways in which these students critically engaged in their lives thereafter. Focusing on the period between 1968 and 1990, when the school was renowned for developing a learning culture that produced students and thinkers who entered and excelled at the tertiary level, as well as individuals who were all able to politically engage with the socio-cultural and economic issues of the time, the dissertation seeks to understand how the school's learning, context and historical moments overlapped, intersected and connected to shape who the students became as human beings and critical citizens.

The time period from between 1968 and 1990, which is the focus of this dissertation, was a period in which, amidst limited and inadequate resources and situations of deep instability

tied to the political and economic crises associated with life under apartheid, the school and its teachers provided educational spaces in which the students were able to develop their critical thinking capabilities and act as agents of personal change. The dissertation thus highlights the kinds of developments and debates that took place at a school level under apartheid that enabled its students to address and overcome the challenges placed before them, and make sense of their individual realities. Giroux (2007:2) notes that it is through particular kinds of teachers and school practices that deep-seated assumptions and myths were often most (and best) articulated.

To examine the above goals, the dissertation focuses on the life histories of a diverse group of fourteen students who attended the chosen high school during the period 1968 to 1990. Such a focus illuminates how their school learning influenced their thinking, world outlook and individual lives after they exited the school. The life history approach, as a methodological technique, offers a unique way of understanding the students' learning and provides a different perspective on the kind of school learning culture that defined who the students became as individuals.

## **1.2. QUICK DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the dissertation was to use the life histories of fourteen past students of Victoria High a school located in Cape Town, to investigate what fashioned the kinds of learning that they utilised over their life course to inform the different stages of their lives. The goal of the dissertation was to provide a unique insight into the kinds of learning that took place under apartheid within a specific school context.

Methodologically, the dissertation uses a blend between the life history method and life course theory to explore the learning and knowledge that the students who attended Victoria High, which was classified as a coloured school during the apartheid era, were provided with. As such, the dissertation focuses on the kinds of dispositions and capitals that each of the past students felt they brought with them into the school, and subsequently, the kinds of 'new' capitals that they developed while they were at the school, and that they are able to call upon in their ensuing lives.

As a way of being able to gauge, understand and analyse their various engagements and personal development under apartheid (and after), the dissertation utilises the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire and Nancy Fraser. It argues that these works offer important ways of engaging with the life stories of the research participants, and provide an alternative view of the way in which the students engaged with their learning under apartheid within a specific school context – a form of learning that was often in direct opposition to the goals and ideals of education framed under the apartheid government.

The period 1968 to 1990 is of particular significance to the dissertation, since it was in this period that education under apartheid was probably at its most repressive. This period in South Africa's education and political system also involved a variety of contradictory phases that eventually led to the country's first democratic elections in 1994.

The dissertation focuses on the time period from 1968 to 1990 for the main narrative of the past students. This period captures both the political (repressive) dimension of the 1960s and its influence on the students, as well as the particular coloured identity that students had to confront with the maturing of a separate education system under 'coloured affairs' (established in the early 1960s). The dissertation notes in this respect that it was only from the late 1960s that the racial separation of students into white, Indian, coloured and African schools was fully in place, and that the end point of 1990 demarcated the closing of the apartheid era and the beginning of a different kind of educational-political experience. These starting and end points for the dissertation were also chosen because the ages of the selected participants ranged between the ages of 39 and 64, which provided data regarding a variety of life transitions and career choices made by the participants after leaving school.

To illustrate the kinds of themes and components that the dissertation unpacks, the following section utilises the life story of one participant who studied at the school in the 1960s and returned to the school in the 1970s as a teacher, until the 1990s. The foremost purpose of presenting this particular life story is to highlight the human dimension of learning, its meaning, and its consequence that will be analysed in the study. This particular life story also illuminates how themes are explored throughout the dissertation with regard to the fourteen student participants.



Crucially, what is disclosed in the dissertation remains the views and perceptions of the interviewees. There were a limited number of documents or supporting literature that could be used to test the veracity of the claims and insights of the fourteen student participants. That said, the goal of the dissertation was to capture the views and understandings that informed participants' lives, how they subjectively perceived themselves, their school learning, and their subsequent life journeys.

### **1.3. THE LEARNING LIFE OF BENJAMIN WALTERS**

#### **1.3.1. The confluence of history and context in learning possibilities**

Benjamin Walters was born and attended school in an old, established suburb of Cape Town in the 1940s, a suburb that would later be designated a whites-only area by the apartheid government. The neighbourhood in which he lived was characterised by a diverse mix of communities that were wealthy and impoverished, literate and illiterate, educated and non-educated, Christian and Muslim. It was also an area that had access to a variety of services and infrastructures, such as transport, schools (both provincial and church), libraries and sports fields. As such, children in the area attended schools and participated in social activities that criss-crossed the boundary of religion, social class, emerging forms of race, and educational ability.

Benjamin attended a nearby church school because few provincial primary schools during that period were open to students perceived to be of mixed origin. While there were also many children of European (and educated) origin at the school, given that many lived in close proximity to the school, the school focused on giving all students the kinds of reading and writing skills that most of the parents in the area did not have. According to Benjamin, the school also focused on inculcating in them social skills that would make them connect to the colonial British culture that predominated in the Cape at the time.

Benjamin loved living in a mixed community, as he felt that this shaped how he thought about himself and the life he could lead. While he lacked the financial and social capital to access what many around him could easily afford, Benjamin focused on doing the best that he could, given his personal context, and his involvement in as many spaces as possible in which he could learn.

Benjamin is the youngest of six children. His father passed away when he was two months old. He was reared by his mother, who struggled to make ends meet as a domestic worker for an English-speaking family by day, and a cleaner at a nearby restaurant by night. As such, she rarely spent time with him or her other children, nor could she assist them with their schoolwork and educational upbringing. Being semi-literate, she repeatedly reminded her children about the value of school and of reading. She also tediously instructed them to keep things clean at all times, to wash and scrub themselves and their surroundings regularly, to learn to cook for themselves, and to always show respect to others.

Benjamin did not have a strong emotional bond with his mother or with other adult figures. His main emotional comfort lay in the books he could read at the local library and the friendships he made with local children. During my interview with Benjamin in 2015, he observed that:

*The only thing that I think gave us constant hope was my mother's vision for her six children to get an education. In that sense she may not have been well schooled but she was educated in terms of having such a vision. And so under candlelight in a two-bedroomed house meagrely furnished we sat every night, very disciplined, and worked on our reading and writing. You know, a single parent with six children, it was hard. We had to be progressive and flexible. We would take turns to go to the library, which was big and established and close to a beautiful public garden in which we could sit and read. The library was a refuge for many children then, as many semi-literate parents insisted their children learn and understand the value of reading. Reading was more than about making you literate, it expanded the world in which you lived and made you challenge the limitations of your reality. Reading did that for us.*

When Benjamin was due to attend high school, his mother had no hesitation about which school he would attend. Not only was it close by, but it was the only established high school in the area for what was then designated as coloured students, but it was also a school renowned for its educational experience and for the attainments by its students. It was a school that did not readily accept the realities being projected for its students by the provincial authorities at the time.

Notwithstanding the challenges of the 1950s, with the severe strictures of apartheid and the Group Areas Act that separated schools racially and moved non-white communities away from the city and suburban centres to the periphery of the city, Benjamin and his family were able to remain in their neighbourhood until well into the 1960s when they were then moved to a coloured suburb closer to Muizenberg. As such, Benjamin was able to walk to school during his high school years, something that he fully cherished. Attending school regularly, Benjamin also valued the opportunity to attend a variety of meetings and social gatherings, and to immerse himself in the community around him. He found these social opportunities most valuable, and drew great strength from the positive social connections within the community where residents were willing and ready to assist one another wherever and whenever possible.

### **1.3.2. Connecting life and learning: the power of school**

Attending Victoria High had a profound effect on Benjamin's life. Not only did he attend and finish his schooling there, but he later returned to the school and spent more than thirty years teaching at the school. His son and daughter also attended the school. Talking about the school and its culture was thus a passionate and emotional experience for Benjamin. What he noted most about going to Victoria High was how the school positioned someone like himself – from a low socio-economic background – to develop the kind of knowledge and skills that made him become part of *“productive ways within the social world that was developing around him”*. Part of this learning was to reject the notion of race that was being foisted upon non-white communities at that time by not participating in the development of a racial discourse that defined and isolated students, as well as by developing skills in himself and other students that helped them engage with and overcome (if needed) their individual backgrounds and contexts. Benjamin reflected that being reminded all the time at school that race and social class were social constructions that did not need to impede his individual development and progress, was important for his self-esteem and confidence and provided a world outlook that was different to that found in the daily life that he inhabited.

### **1.3.3. Learning acculturation, criticality, and personal change**

More than twenty-five years since its establishment in the 1950s, Victoria High had an established and settled school culture and values that it sought to instil in students like

Benjamin Walters. It had a teaching cohort that had been recruited and developed over a period of time, with established credentials and expertise. The school and staff had developed a curriculum that emphasised the value of hard work, individual discipline, academic excellence, critical thinking, and political understanding. Furthermore, the school encouraged the spirit of hard work among both teachers and students, and organised the school day in ways that maximised learning opportunities. Teachers willingly worked beyond their designated teaching hours, as well as in the evenings, over weekends and during school holidays, and some even visited students at home to assist them with their schooling – all without extra remuneration. The notion of excellence was something that was instilled in both the teachers and students. This is exemplified by the fact that when Benjamin joined the teaching staff in the 1970s with a teaching diploma from Hewitt

Training College, he was immediately encouraged to further his academic learning. He did this via correspondence through the University of South Africa (UNISA), obtaining two additional degrees and several certificates for short courses by the time he took early retirement in the 1990s.

One clear motto that the school adhered to strictly was that physical infrastructure and inadequate resources would never be a hindrance to the development of its students. It was the teachers who were deemed the main resource in the learning of the enrolled children, and it was their ability to instil in students critical thinking and engagement with the world that was most desired by parents and students. Learning in the school was defined as operating not only in, but also beyond the classroom, and it was expected that forms of learning take place in all social and extra-curricular activities, whether in the non-racial sport that the school espoused or in the performance of Shakespearean plays and the presentation of drama evenings. The focus within all sporting and club activities – such as soccer, chess, netball, tennis and rugby, or film, drama, magazine, debating, photographic, science and history societies – was to encourage students to develop leadership proficiency, argumentative skills and social skills (for example the building of friendships), as well as personal attributes such as discipline, punctuality, respect, patience and critical thinking.

Benjamin noted that a focus within the school was connecting school learning to the socio-political context. Thus, teaching mathematics was more than teaching numbers, and focused

on how to apply mathematics to numerically understand the gravity of social inequality; teaching music was about showing that culture and art were not the express domain of the privileged and the rich, but provided crucial means of critical expression and resistance for those oppressed; physical education was about building assertiveness, resilience and discipline; and literature and history were forms of knowledge that could expose and connect students to the outside world, beyond the geographical borders of South Africa, and beyond the boundaries of their social imaginations.

Benjamin further asserted that the school's maxim, that 'the greatest weapon against the state is not ammunition but critical thinking', was something that resonated with him throughout his life. Accordingly, he was never afraid to question, disagree, and assert his personal opinions, which were based on deep scrutiny. His criticality was developed during active participation in the debating society and during class discussions.

In the latter regard, Benjamin noted two processes and events that shaped his personal thinking and subsequent decisions, both as student and educator. Firstly, from the 1960s, students had to decide whether they wanted to attend tertiary institutions, for example the University of the Western Cape (UWC) that was established specifically to cater for coloured students. Teachers at Victoria High were adamant that attending UWC would reinforce and add to racial segregationist measures, and thus encouraged students to consider alternative universities. While Benjamin and a few others teachers had different views on this, many students at Victoria High distanced themselves from going to UWC until the late 1970s. This adherence, to a majority view even when he did not agree, was an important lesson that he had to learn.

Secondly, the school, amidst student uprisings, boycotts and civil unrest in the 1980s, always vehemently opposed the prominent call for 'liberation before education'. The school's position was that students should not sacrifice education and the opportunity to become critical and competent citizens who take up important positions in various work places, and instead espoused the position of 'education before liberation'. Firmly associated with the political position of the professional body the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA), this group shaped how Benjamin approached social strife and educational provision for most of his life. Thus, even when formal schooling came to a standstill in the 1980s due to the students

boycotts, he encouraged his colleagues at the school to continue teaching in their garages and lounges at home to ensure that students continued their learning and personal development. For Benjamin, always adopting a social justice framework (as emphasised in his schooling) ensured that learning was practised wherever he went, whether it was at church, in the neighbourhood, or in family and extended family discussions.

#### **1.3.4. Identity-making through learning**

For Benjamin his adult identity was nurtured by the readings he was exposed to at school, the non-racial and non-sectarian stance of Victoria High, and the variety of engagements that he was exposed to with individuals at school who thought in creative and critical ways about how to oppose apartheid and all its repressive regulations. This interaction with the ideas and views of other critical thinkers paved different ways of thinking and being in the world for him. In terms of building his aspirations, Victoria High inspired him (and his fellow students) to always ‘think big’ and refute the limited identity forms espoused by apartheid, such as political forms of Colouredness. For Benjamin, having been born with a darker complexion, this assertion of a humane thinking and intellectual identity was always very reassuring.

#### **1.3.5. Teachers as lifelong students**

Benjamin admired his teachers for their love of teaching and their desire to impart knowledge. They also focused on teaching students to be responsible for their own learning and not to spoon-feed them. This inspired him to become a teacher and to nurture his passion for learning. When he later returned to Victoria High as a teacher, he taught his students to take pride in their work and to constantly read more broadly than what was asked of them in their school work

#### **1.3.6. Learning as transition**

Benjamin reflected that Victoria High always focused on where each of their students would end up. This required teachers to understand the various transitions that their students had to undergo on their path to adulthood, and to provide the necessary counselling and life guidance that was required. This included an understanding of the economic, social, political and institutional worlds that they would most likely encounter and to connect them to others who had gone down such paths previously (whether as successes or failures). Professionals and individuals from a variety of occupations were often invited to return to the school to

speak about their subsequent lives as a way of showing the different pathways that students could follow. While social mobility was deemed inevitable for students who were going to enter professional positions, the school and teachers were always keen to emphasise the value of humaneness and the potential destructive nature of economic pursuit. In encouraging criticality and responsibility amongst the students, many teachers sought to change the ways in which students, and the communities they came from, thought about their lives and their futures.

### **1.3.7. Learning political discretion**

Teachers at Victoria High were always considered politically inclined, with many holding a variety of professional, political and ideological positions. Inevitably, many would pass their views on to students and influence the way in which the students thought about the world and their place in it. Being exposed to these views at school, according to Benjamin, could often be a challenging experience, but its key value was that it helped students decide what they believed or did not believe, and to take up a position on the different issues. For Benjamin, on returning to Victoria High as a teacher, it was a firm understanding of where he stood on various issues that helped him to navigate his way as a teacher at the school in subsequent years. For him, political issues could best be dealt with and shared through a stimulating and rich learning experience, which was a position that many other teachers did not always share. Learning to work with and respect these different positions, according to Benjamin, was what defined him as a critical thinker and engaged teacher, and helped him to promote a strong culture of learning at the school.

### **1.3.8. Learning through politicised pedagogy**

Benjamin Walters observed that, in taking up firm political and ideological positions and using these to frame their pedagogical practice, combined with the kinds of materials they used in the classroom, teachers played a key role in the development of a particular way of thinking about the world. Positing that learning was never neutral, many teachers went beyond normal teaching time-frames and content knowledge to try to make learning meaningful and relevant for the majority of students at the school. This was not always possible in all subject areas, but staff often discussed how their teaching methods should vary in accordance with topics, the grade level of students, and the intended knowledge objective of each lesson.

Given their collective approach to the needs of students, teachers often helped each other think through innovative ways of teaching certain content areas and relating this to the everyday realities of students, whether that entailed using drama, plays, films, debates, book extracts, discussions or practical demonstrations to enhance their understanding of key concepts.

### **1.3.9. Learning the social and not the economic**

Benjamin said that teachers did not always take the connection between education and work seriously and often privileged the economic dimension over the civil society dimension. He asserted that while students needed the critical skills to enable them to be adaptable to the various situations in their lives and work, the teachers felt that it was their contribution, as fellow workers in changing the nature of society and work, which needed greater emphasis. He observed that the primary purpose of schooling and the teaching of subjects like Maths and Science at Victoria High, was to develop a level of scientific thinking that would insert students into key positions within the economy and allow them to change the ways in which work was perceived and organised. While the above was more of an ideal than a realistic target, many within the school sought to develop the kinds of thinkers who could both secure top positions and change perceptions of the disadvantaged and marginalised.

Interviewed in 2015, Benjamin reflected that the emphasis in current educational debates was often not on learning but rather more on achievement. He felt that the excessive focus on the matriculation pass rate did not focus on the kind of learning that was necessary for students to make a decent life and have a successful future once they exited school, nor the kinds of learning that would make them better human beings and social citizens. Benjamin mused that:

*Victoria High school wasn't only about the academic and that is the problem that I have with the education system today. The system now is about marks, it is about targets, schools must get targets, they must score this and that. If it's all about marks we can get the children to easily get 80%, 90% in history, and other subjects. You can do that in a thousand ways, you know, telling your students to study that, do that, leave out that, you can get your 100% passes and get all your children through the exam. The problem is that is not education or learning.*



## **1.4. CONCEPTUALISING THE STUDY**

### **1.4.1. Rationale**

The starting goal for this dissertation was to explore the schooling and learning experiences of students who attended Victoria High between 1968 and 1990 and to examine what students said they took away with them from their learning to inform their subsequent lives. The purpose is to illustrate the kind of agency that a particular form of learning facilitated under apartheid, and to highlight the value of knowing this at a time when school attainment has emphasised outcomes and results at the expense of overall student development. It is hoped that the study can add value to debates on schooling and learning within South African schools at the present time, as well as highlight what can be achieved when alternative kinds of teaching and learning pathways are pursued. While the goal of the study is not to generate findings or arguments that are generalisable, it is hoped that key lessons can be drawn to inform the overall understanding of education and its purpose in South Africa, both in the past and in the present.

The above focus originated from a concern that policymakers and educationists tend to 'blame' schools for underperformance and for not adequately preparing students for employment, yet do not necessarily know what makes for a 'good school' or the kind of learning that is needed for students to successfully bridge the gap between school, work and living. As the researcher for this dissertation, and having completed a Masters research at Victoria High in 2010 interviewing students about their goals and aspirations, I became aware of the school's significantly different approach to learning and school culture. As such, I was keen to find out more about the reported critical thinkers and productive citizens that the school produced and to explore what the participants in the research thought was different between past and present practices. Rather than draw comparisons, for this dissertation I was keen to find out what past students thought they took away from their schooling experience that best informed their subsequent lives. My interest was to understand the complex ways in which student agency intersected with societal structure, the history and context of individual schools, and the kinds of learning that were favoured. What students were taught in the past, how they were taught, and the kinds of learning experiences that shaped their perspectives of the world seemed to me to be an important missing dimension in educational discussions.

### 1.4.2. Research plan

In the above regard, I developed the following main research question for the study, namely:

- How did students at Victoria High School in the period 1968 to 1990 mediate what they were taught, the cultures and climate of the school, and their personal learning, growth, and life expectations?

In engaging with the above question, I also developed the following sub questions:

- What were the connections between the schooling experiences of past students and their life contexts and backgrounds?
- What were the kinds of ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ that embedded themselves within the thinking and lives of the group of Victoria High students once they left the school?
- What did the students have to say about the learning that they encountered at Victoria High that for them had a lasting effect or imprint on their lives?
- What learning practices did they identify that had the most telling influence on how they understood their lives at the time and that helped their subsequent thinking and decision making?

I chose to focus on Victoria High because of its reputation for ‘producing’ critical students and student activists under apartheid, especially students who went on to play key roles within Western Cape and national circles upon leaving school. Founded in the heart of Cape Town suburbia, with limited resources and a mainly poor coloured student population, the school built up a reputation for refining the thinking, identity (through its non-racial and non-sectarian policies), world perspective and future prospects of its students. I felt that I would be able to contact a variety of students who could speak about different kinds of learning experiences and different kinds of life destinations, particularly since the school has drawn students from across the peninsula because of its reputation for providing a springboard for children’s future career opportunities and developing them as independent thinkers. Berkhout (2008) notes in this regard that it is often the subjective forms of identity-making within a school (like Victoria High, which provided mainly for coloured students) that can ‘speak’ powerfully and reveal much about how individual students engage with both schooling and their lives.

In the dissertation I use the terms coloured, African, white and Indian in their historical form developed under apartheid to define the different South African communities and citizenship that made up the South African citizenry. While the dissertation employs the above terms, it treats the terms as constructions of a past social structure in South Africa (to which the participants in this dissertation were subjected) where in which a hierarchical ordering based on race was inscribed into the fabric of everyday life. The dissertation asserts that the terms are not natural, stable or static categories (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, Kahn & Seekings, 2010). Given that the democratic elections of 1994 were focused on eradicating past injustices, it remains an irony that the terms continue to hold currency in current policy lexicons, seemingly to identify those who continue to need help (for redress purposes) to overcome past disadvantage.

#### **1.4.3. Key assertions**

The dissertation starts with a simple premise, namely that there is little doubt that the school context of different students (culture, climate, activities, curriculum, teachers' actions and instructional methods and school-wide policies) influences their learning experiences in important ways, and that this has broader implications for their future educational attainment, employment and family relations (Davis & Jordan, 1994:570). There is a substantial body of literature on the role of the teacher and the school in the learning of the child, as well as on the kinds of learning materials and practices that enhance this (Bygate, Swain & Skehan, 2001; Holt-Reynolds, 2000; Sfard, 1998a; 1998b).

My key assertion for the dissertation, however, was that little is known about the kinds of learning that best contributed to how past students from Victoria High have positioned themselves within their everyday realities post-apartheid. Student identities were fundamentally shaped by the kinds of learning children were exposed to under apartheid schooling, yet little is known about the kinds of things they learnt that are embedded within their subsequent practice.

While the literature on the 'hidden curriculum' often highlights the kinds of learning that took place outside of formal teaching, little research has focused on the ways in which this played out within subsequent practice and life (whether at work, at home, in churches, or on sport

fields). The main assertion, therefore, of the dissertation is that the historical, political, economic and social contexts influence the learning process and lives of students in key ways.

#### **1.4.4. Methodology**

The dissertation adopted a qualitative approach, as it was dealing with past students' opinions on how Victoria High influenced their schooling and lives. In this regard, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001:22) note how such a paradigm is most appropriate for the research of individuals or small groups where the objective is "to understand the subjective world of human experience and so to speak, to get inside the research participants' heads and understand from within". The qualitative paradigm in this dissertation thesis is therefore linked to in-depth interviews with past students and teachers at Victoria High, a school designated for coloured students under apartheid, to make key assertions about education and learning under apartheid.

More specifically, the dissertation used a blend of life history and life course theory to explore the learning experiences of fourteen student participants (8 males and 6 females) who attended Victoria High in Cape Town during the period 1968 to 1990. The focus on a life history angle was stimulated by Foucault's prompt that the challenge is not to think historically about the past, but rather to use history to rethink the present (Foucault, 1977a).

In so doing I focused on getting in touch with at least one past student from each phase of the twenty-year period. None of the past students were tied to the others in any way, i.e. none were in the same class or grade of a given year, and I did not use a snowballing effect where past students give names of others that they know about. None of the past students were the same age, lived in the same geographical area, were tied to similar sporting codes or teams or worked together. Given the time period being studied, all the students would have been identified as coloured under apartheid, although some now self-identify as Indian or African. In this regard, it is notable that, under apartheid, all students at Victoria High would by necessity have been defined as coloured. This was a political determination that noted that all students who had a mix of Indian, white, African or other parents were categorised as coloured. When they were interviewed, the past students self-identified in the following way: one white, three Indian, one African and nine coloured, although many added the caveat that they preferred not to be thought of according to any racial designation.

The fourteen students attended the school during the time period of 1968 to 1990. One attended the school in the late 1960's, three were at the school in the early 1970s, three were at the school in the late 1970s, four attended the school in the early 1980s and three attended the school in the late 1980s. At the time that they attended the school, six past students lived within a few minutes from the school (travelling there via public transport), five lived in distant, outlying areas like Athlone and Sherwood Park, while four students came from the Southern suburbs, from areas like Retreat, Heathfield, Grassy Park and Diep River.

As a way of triangulating what the past students expressed, in-depth interviews were also conducted with four people who were senior teachers at the school during the period 1968 to 1990. These interviews provided a broader understanding of the school ethos, culture of learning and pedagogical practices used during that period.

The choice of using the life history technique when engaging with the research participants was to illuminate the complex intersection of educational and social institutional provision, the social lives and thinking of each of the participants as past students, and the structures and contexts that framed how they thought and lived. As a research technique, life history allowed me to look at the lives of the fourteen past students as a whole and to locate the details that they provided to examine their various transitions and the different roles they came to play in life (Atkinson, 1998:123). The life history approach helped me not only to obtain data from the participants on how the school framed their experiences, thinking, behaviour and future lives in particular ways, but to then locate this within their subsequent lives through their subjective gaze. In this respect, Wicks and Whiteford (2006:8) highlight that "life stories are particular narratives used to reconstruct and interpret whole lives to obtain a comprehensive, over time, view of people's experiences. That is, they can be used to understand not only one life across time, but how individual lives interact with the whole".

The challenge, however, of using the life history technique, is that it does not explain enough of the different stages of a life and the different influences that shape each of them, nor does it reflect the kind and extent of human agency within different lives.

As such, I blended the life history technique with life course theory, which for me represents the developmental side of the life history method. The life course theory posits that a dynamic exchange exists between individuals and their environments. This conceptualisation yields

four constructs: location, referring to the historical and geographical patterns of life; social ties, relating to social relationships; personal control, describing aspects of agency; and timing, pertaining to individual development (Giele & Elder, 1998). This use of the life course theory assisted me to track the ‘whole’ lives of individuals in their different life cycles, both at an individual and group level. It also enabled me to explore the intricate interrelationship between the social structures and the impact of time, place and history on the individual’s lives (Elder, 1996), and helped me to understand how changes in time, age and historical events shape the thinking, opportunities, aspirations and behaviours of students (for example the Group Areas Act or the school uprisings of the 1980s).

Furthermore, from life course theory, the focus on agency enabled me to approach the participants, not as passive recipients of historical change and particular social structures, but as agents capable of making decisions that determined and shaped their lives. In this regard, new situations encountered in adulthood are often shaped by earlier experiences and the meanings attached to them (Marshall & Mueller, 2003). Some student decisions were also influenced by their temporal orientations to the situation, with some decisions requiring intense focus on the present, while others were influenced by long-term goals (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Life course theory also helps to depict the lives of individuals as intimately linked by social ties that are interdependent and reciprocal on a number of levels, with societal and individual experiences linked through the family and the network of shared relationships (Elder, 1998).

One last important dimension of life course theory is that it highlights the ideas of trajectories, transitions and turning points in the lives of individuals. Trajectories are “paths of change in developmental processes” (Van Geert, 1994:31), while transitions are entry points for new roles within trajectories (Hagestad, 2003). A transition is a gradual change often associated with acquiring or relinquishing roles, such as changing careers within the work-life trajectory (Elder & Johnson, 2003), while turning points involve abrupt and substantial change from one state to another (Cairns & Rodkin, 1998; Shin & White-Traut, 2007).

Given that the research focused on human subjects who attended a state-funded institution as students at a given time, the study ensured that it conformed to all the required forms of ethical clearance and institutional permission by applying for permission from the school, as

well as from the Western Cape Education Department. I attached these permission documents when I later applied for (and was granted) ethical clearance for the project from Stellenbosch University. I did so notwithstanding that all the participants in the study were no longer at school and were mature adults who could decide individually whether or not to participate in the study through signing (or declining to sign) a consent form. To protect the identity and privacy of the participants, I used pseudonyms for both the participants and the associated school.

In terms of the research process, I interviewed all the participants at their homes (or venues determined by them) at stipulated times. To ensure confidentiality, I transcribed all the interviews personally and thereafter stored the electronic files on a password-protected computer to which no one else had access.

Lastly, one of my big challenges in the project was that I was a complete outsider as I moved from Zimbabwe with my husband and three children to live and work in Cape Town in 2008. When I described my project to others they would often remark that I would struggle to get relevant data, given that I had little insider knowledge of the South African school system and how schooling operated under apartheid within the Western Cape. Thus, in terms of my researcher positionality, a key challenge was how to understand and tell the participants' narratives without having an insider perspective, as well as how to use my 'outsider' status to my advantage. As a researcher, I thus found that this was best accomplished by focusing less on the school system, and more on the living subjects who were produced within its walls and who, through individual agency and interaction with the school structures, came to make key decisions about their lives.

#### **1.4.5. Dissertation structure**

In terms of the overall document layout, the dissertation comprises of ten chapters, each of which is described briefly below.

In this chapter (1), I describe what came to inform the focus of the study, how the study was initially conceptualised, how the study was undertaken, what the key assertions were, what literature and theorists were used, and what methodological decisions were made to generate the kinds of data that was required to address the research questions. This chapter

provides the reader with a bird's-eye view of all the issues and arguments which can be used throughout the dissertation to track the key themes raised and the arguments made.

Chapter 2, the literature review, then locates these issues against the backdrop of the larger literature that has examined similar concerns elsewhere. Chapter 3 outlines the different theorists that the dissertation uses to explain the data and its connection with the research questions and associated literature. Using the works of Bourdieu, Fraser and Freire, this chapter focuses on how to best explain what the fourteen students from Victoria High shared at school in ways that assist readers to think differently about learning under apartheid, especially learning that was geared towards indoctrination on the one hand, and in constant opposition to apartheid on the other.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology that was employed in the dissertation, especially why a blend of life history and life course theory was used. This chapter discusses how the study went about reflecting on the interrelated lives of individuals and how their lives were influenced by social conditions, history, time and individual agency. The chapter points out that the interviews had limited utility in collecting particular forms of data and knowledge, and that the use of life stories and life course theory provided a richer understanding of students and the challenges they confronted at that time.

Chapter 5 introduces the reader to the school, as well as to the fourteen participants and the four teachers who took part in the research project. Noting the school's chosen ethos and advocacy of non-racialism, non-collaboration, non-sectarianism, love of knowledge and respect for humanity, the chapter highlights how the school created an environment in which different identities could grow and where critical thinking could be cherished.

Chapter 6 weaves the views of the fourteen students into one narrative to show how the dispositions of these students, internalised in the school context, came to be formalised through particular perceptions and views of life embedded in life practices (Bourdieu, 1984:69).

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 analyse what the participants learnt and took away from the school into their lives. The chapters variously show how the students came to understand how the



learning they were exposed to could inform their ways of everyday living and provide them meaning therein.

The final chapter and conclusion draws together all the main arguments and threads, linking these to the methodology used in the dissertation, and locating this against the background of the larger literature review. Key findings are explained as a way of emphasising the importance of the study and its contribution to current educational debates.

#### **1.4.6. Significance of the research**

It is when learning connects to individual dispositions and understandings that students have the necessary tools to construct the rest of their lives. This learning provides them with the mechanisms to exert their agency and transcend their social circumstances, as well as to adapt their different dispositions for subsequent challenges.

In South Africa, authors like Cloete (2009:3), and Sheppard and Cloete (2009:60) argue that schools with poor learning cultures and weak results hinder student employability, and that many school leavers do not have the skills and competencies required to survive in the competitive adult and working world. They assert that getting schools to work optimally will resolve this challenge and dilemma. The problem is that there is little literature or evidence on what ‘make good schools work’, nor the cultures that they imbibe that allow students to go on and connect their learning to their future lives in productive ways.

The value of this study is that it attempts to show what a reputable ‘previously disadvantaged’ school under apartheid did to provide its students with the tools and understanding to engage with the social world after leaving school, and describes what the students say about what they took away with them into life. It is hoped that this perspective will contribute to current national and international debates on connecting students and their learning to life outside of school.

The dissertation advocates for a culture of learning that “is a core part of what we think of as ‘arc of life’ learning, which comprises the activities in our daily lives that keep us learning, growing, and exploring” (Thomas & Brown, 2011:18). This learning culture emphasises that students only develop academically when they take responsibility for their learning and their lives, and suggests that the curriculum needs to be organised to provide choice and autonomy

to students to allow them to make decisions about their learning through meaningful and engaging activities. When students are agents in their own learning, they have better opportunities to think critically, flexibly and strategically. Engaging with past students from Victoria High, as the study does, provides a critical lens by which to view how a school, that prioritised 'education for liberation', influenced and shaped the lives of its students, as it was fully focused on what its students would achieve as 'complete students' in their subsequent lives.

## CHAPTER 2: LEARNING, STRUCTURES AND HISTORY

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

As noted in the first chapter, the goal of the dissertation is to better understand the ‘quality’ of learning that students experience in schools that ultimately determine the different things that they do and the people they become once they exit school. More specifically, the dissertation explores what it is that students learnt at one school under apartheid South Africa, and the kinds of things they were taught that firmly shaped how they understood their worlds and how to locate themselves in it.

In that regard, this second chapter draws on a broad literature that in different ways provides insight into how student identities get shaped by their learning, what kinds of agencies they develop in this process, what kinds of social factors are involved, how school cultures and school learning help these take form, how teachers inform how students view themselves and their learning, and the nature of transition from school to adult life.

Also, given that student experiences play themselves out in historical time and operate according to a particular set of political, social and economic conditions, the chapter draws on the broader literature that speaks to changing forms of race, social class, religion, gender, and geography in the contemporary world, as well as how these elements may mix in particular social settings.

To engage with the above issues, the chapter is broken up into two sections. The first section starts by defining the concept of learning (as found in the literature) as something ‘internal’ or personal that students use to understand themselves, others, and the world around them. Learning is a process in which their behaviour, attitudes or emotions change with experience. Section A then focuses on the issue of student identity and agency in the literature and discusses the extent to which students can or do make rational choices about their lives, given the schools they attend. Thereafter the chapter explores some international and local studies that have looked at students and their transitioning from school to adult life. The goal here is to develop some key definitions and concepts about social class, race, and other contextual factors that intersect with student identity-making as captured in sociological studies in education. The section asserts that institutional and historical factors play key roles in shaping people’s transitions and lives, as well as the social trajectories of their families, their education and work, and their individual aspirations and

behaviour. To complete the discussion, Section A concludes with a brief discussion on the literature of student transition from school to adult and work life, which is an important dimension in the subsequent lives of students.

Thereafter, to illustrate the value of looking at various international studies and literature, Section B links the above literature to debates about social class, race, and religion as key variables that shape identity-making in Cape Town. It does so in relation to the particular ways in which a social setting like Cape Town, its history, and the historical trajectory of teaching and learning in the period 1968-1990, may have shaped the ways in which students thought about themselves at that time.

## **2.2. SECTION A**

### **2.2.1. Learning and Identity**

Learning is defined in the dissertation as the transference and engagement of knowledge and understanding within and through the world. It is about the ‘ways of doing’ and ‘ways of thinking’ through which meaning is attributed. This may be at the individual level or at the organisational level, where skills are vested to create, acquire, and transfer knowledge, and behaviour is modified to reflect new knowledge and insight (Govender, 2009:365).

Learning transforms who individuals are, and what they can do. It is therefore fundamentally an experience of becoming, and of identity formation, and implies the bringing forth of something new (Wenger, 1998:225). Lave and Wenger (1991:53) assert that “identity development and learning go hand in hand. Being engaged in identity construction involves learning, which implies becoming a different person”.

This connection between who individuals are and what they experience is tied to the variety of defining characteristics that make up an individual identity, which has both inner qualities and outer representations of self. With the former, learning intersects with identity through the ways in which individuals makes sense of themselves, their personal looks, their personalities, their beliefs and their fears. With the latter, learning is tied to how individuals are positioned according to their sexuality, gender, and belonging to particular cultures, nationality, religions, or families. For both, this intersection between learning and identity is “an unfolding story that is continually recast in the course of experience” (Sennett, 2000:176-177).

Given that learning is that process by which individuals act upon themselves to produce particular modes of identity and particular kinds of subjective resources (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995), the learning process initially starts off as rhetorical and is concerned with helping individuals define who they are and what they value. It later evolves into how individuals situate themselves in relation to others (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995:91) in ways that give them the power to act, think and behave in particular ways.

In this regard, the ways in which learning connects to identity organises particular forms of meaning and certainty for individuals. As Liu, McCreanor, McIntosh and Teaiwa (2005:15) note:

Identity is a fundamental organizing principle in the enactment of power, in the mobilization for and allocation of resources and a critical marker of inclusion and exclusion in social organisations. Who we are, our belonging to or demarcation from particular, local, regional, national and international groupings strongly influences lifestyles and our chances as individuals and as populations as well.

Learning further assists in how individuals find and make meaning, how they get “recognized as a certain kind of person in a given context” (Gee, 2000:99), and how they develop and grow the ability to integrate significant aspects of their selves into a relatively coherent whole (Roeser, Peck & Nasir, 2006; Schachter, 2005).

However, learning does differ according to context and the kinds of opportunities that are available to individuals, and the kinds of educational, psychological, and sociological interactions they individually experience, as well as share with others (Claxton & Lucas, 2009). What learning they achieve is thus crucially framed by how they are able to engage with their individual worlds as well as those of others, and how they then exert their wills thereon.

In this respect, learning occurs when individuals interact with society and its matrix of social and institutional relationships and practices (Kaplan & Flum, 2012) in ways that get them to take on particular identity forms (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:35) and modes of belonging. This cannot happen in isolation (Castells, 2000:6), and requires, as Hall (1991:21) observes, that identity forms be threaded “through the eye of the needle *of the other*” for them to be able to construct themselves (Hall, 1991:21). Benwell and Stokoe (2006:35) note that “identity is a response to the activities of

others” and that the saying ‘no man is an island’ is an apt description of the inter-connectedness an individual shares with other people.

Meaning-making is based on a variety of social attributes that are integral to how individuals both sense themselves and are seen or recognised by others. As Jenkins (1996:42) notes, “it is not enough simply to assert an identity. Rather, it must also be validated, or not, by those with whom we have dealings”. In this, the ‘other’ can take many forms: it can be a reference group, an institution, or a knowledge system (Marková, 2006).

Moreover, as Castells (2000:7) observes, identities don’t only depend on the ‘other’ for meaning, but also for their longevity. Identities only become a real source of meaning when they are *enforced over time* in the depth of other people’s bodies and souls.

#### **2.2.1.1. Identities remonstrated**

Identities are also remonstrated and/or protested against, especially when they are produced under undesirable and detrimental situations and conditions (Weedon, 1997:32). Sennett (2000:176) refers to this as “defensive identities, identities of retrenchment of the known against the unpredictability of the unknown and uncontrollable”. Individuals often adjust or radically change their self-images in given situations and contexts (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000).

School grounds, for example, can thus easily become the melting pots of politicised student movements or alternative student cultures that bring with them calls for anarchy, self-assertion, spirits of defiance, or idealisation of ‘the life of the streets’ (Fraser, Meier, Potter, Sekgobela & Poore, 1996). In such situations, students assert themselves in ways that involve interpretation, reinterpretation, and self-evaluation, and depend on the context and the historical period that they live in. These need not lead to outcomes like student success or social mobility, but are critical to their individual development and how they interact with learning. In this respect, identity formation, social context, school and home cultures and climates, are all critical components of the learning process, and how individuals grow.

#### **2.2.2. Learning, aspiration, and schooling**

All students possess the capacity to reflect on what happens across their lives. As they get older they also constantly develop and redevelop visions of their various lives, and what inform these at different moments. As such, they are ‘transcultural knowers’ that engage with and interpret their

challenges and desires, both past and present, in ways that give them agency and help them better understand what has happened and happens in their everyday lives (Swartz, 2009:4). They are furthermore ‘social shifters’ who make sense of their lives through regularly reformulating who they are in relation to the social imagination of the places that they live. In this, they are able to co-construct new worlds and futures through both their imaginings and their reflections (Durham, 2000:113). Willis (2005:461) refers to this “as the compulsory living materials of different imaginings and mouldings”.

Students have views of their futures that extend beyond the limitations of their worlds and the structural prohibitions therein. At the same time they also often fully understand the limitations of their own socio-economic background and the extent to which social change will shape that. This positions them in taking up particular attitudes and positions in the world. Moreover, while social context matters, the social period in which they live, and the extent to which they can imagine and aspire, are crucial elements in how they as students think about their lives. In the end, they ‘become what they imagine’ depending on how successfully they navigate the possibilities and the limitations of the structural and agential dimensions of their lives.

#### **2.2.2.1. Cultures of Learning**

“Cultures of learning” are the different kinds of learning that take place “through engagement within and through the world”. They acclimatise and assimilate change into their processes (Weeks, 2012) and emerge from actual learning experiences that take place at the individual, organisational, institutional, and sector level that give rise to particular cultural attributes and attitudes (Thomas & Brown, 2011:38). Cultures of learning inculcate “habits of mind” and “action” that are underpinned by “generic and open-minded attitudes to learning” (Claxton & Lucas, 2009:9-11).

In relation to institutions and structures, cultures of learning are what nurtures the mental skills and attitudes within individuals - such as curiosity, courage, exploration and investigation, experimentation, reason and discipline, imagination, sociability and reflection - to shape who they think they are and how they interact with their individual life worlds. It is asserted that it is when mental skills and attitudes become deeply ingrained and grounded that they influence how individuals learn, behave, take actions and understand their worlds (Senge, 1990:8).

### 2.2.2.2. What lies within and what lives without

Appadurai (1996:54) has observed that even in the “meanest and most hopeless of lives, the most brutal and dehumanizing of circumstances, and the harshest of lived inequalities”, it is the play of the imagination that serves to liberate and emancipate individuals and that gives them the agency, choices, and capacities to rethink their pathways through life. Even in the drearier of situations, individuals move forward because they are able to dream about better lives. According to Appadurai (2004:84), being ‘able to imagine’ requires both a vision of the future and a plan to get there - which he defines as aspiration (the wants, preferences, choices, calculations and plans of individuals). Aspiration for Appadurai (2004) is formed in the “thickness of social life” and serves as a key navigational tool for individuals to map their worlds. It is what is used to imagine future lives, career choices, and future possibilities, and what provides “the insight into what students think and feel about themselves, their school and the roles they are meant to fulfil within their communities” (Ley, Nelson and Beltyukova, 1996:134). Aspiration is thus that which brings prospective imaginings into the present (Appadurai, 2004:67).

But aspiration is not only that which inspires and fuels individuals to work on the kind of groundwork necessary to lead future lives of their choice. It is also the means by which their subsequent lives are gauged. Aspiration is thus both the personal “aims, goals and objectives toward which each individual directs seeking behaviour” (Johnson 1992:99), as well as the extent to which individuals are able to identify and set goals for the future (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996:179). As such, aspiration is both a predictor and a product of individual ability, personal attribute, socialisation and experience (Gutman & Akerman, 2008).

Notably, while aspiration may be a key measure for many individuals - both for what they learn (inspiration) and for how they map this learning onto pathways (ambition) that allow them to achieve their life goals (Quaglia & Perry, 1995) - it is not individually or internally bound. While it may reflect states of mind that motivate individuals, it is fundamentally shaped by the expectations of others – most notably parents, family members, fellow peers, and teachers (Cart, 2009) - and the worlds that these actors think they will operate in.

Teachers and schools play key roles in this process for all individuals. They shape the ways in which individuals imagine the possibilities of their lives and equip them with the kinds of life lessons (and aspirations) that they invariably use to navigate their future lives. Schools and teachers do this both



through who and what they themselves are and through the worlds they as schools and teachers inhabit, as well as the syllabi and subjects that they provide (Bajema, Miller & Williams, 2002:61).

Furthermore, aspirations also invariably reflect desires found amongst groups who inhabit common spaces or zones (both in schools and outside of it). Reay (2001:69) suggests that aspirations are inevitably inspired and informed by people with the same life experiences and similar levels of social mobility. As such, ‘the capacity to aspire’ is not just a capability that enables students “to read a map of their journey into the future” (Appadurai, 2004:76) - and which is improved every time it is exercised - it reflects how individuals come to make sense and understand the effects of the unequal distribution of social, cultural and economic capital on their lives (Bok, 2010:164).

For the dissertation, it is important to understand the ways in which individual identities are discerned, as well as the various structural forms and limitations that impact on how these identities take their shape and form.

### **2.2.2.3. Knotting learning to schools**

Much has been written about the interconnectedness of education and identity (Davidson, 1996; Erikson, 1968; Gee, 2000; Kaplan & Flum, 2009; Ogbu, 1987). In this, education is regarded as the “combination of processes throughout a life time [that] shapes the ways in which the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs, senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person” (Jarvis, 2009:25). The literature shows that it is the school that plays a formative role in this combination of processes that informs the development of individual identities (Schachter, 2005). It is the school that provides the context and required social interaction necessary for identity exploration, regardless of the specific teaching practices employed (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010:77). It is also at school where self-concept, personal values, interests and career goals are initially defined (Kaplan & Flum, 2009; Roeser *et al.*, 2006; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005).

Soudien (2007:34) notes that it is schools that are the main ‘terrain’ where individuals reach their potential during their “growing up” years, with schools constructing individual identities through official discourses (macro-level context of socio-political structure), non-formal discourses (meso-

level context of school policy and institutional practices), and informal discourses (micro-level context of relationships and idiosyncrasies) (Dawson, 2003).

On the one hand, schools co-construct identities through their different structures such as admissions policies, tracking systems, disciplinary policies, and even the pervading, dominant speech acts (what is said or not said by school personnel and other powerful actors in the school) (Dawson, 2003). On the other, schools directly participate in the ways in which individuals negotiate the meanings attached to their evolving identities.

School systems may push individuals into particular identity boxes and also “push identities as it were” into people as a way of placing them socially, and to characterise for them supposedly personal “essences” (Ortner, 2003:91). Alternatively, schools may interact with individuals through institutional rules, interactions, or preferred texts that lead to them internalising the ‘rules of the game’ and ‘ways of being’ at their respective schools (Bourdieu, 1984; Fuchs, 2007; Tabak & Baumgartner, 2004). In both cases, individuals are ‘cultivated’ and ‘created’ at school (Willms, 2002) where their confidence to confront future challenges are invariably fostered (Davidson, 1996).

A number of studies illustrate this. For example, Davidson (1996), in her book *Making and Molding Identity in Schools: Student Narratives on Race, Gender, and Academic Engagement*, observes that it was the external feedback from peers and authorities at school that invariably informed the particular identity forms that individual students drew on at school, and could be related to their behaviour, attitudes, and approaches to academic engagement. Chisholm (1991) further shows how many schools under oppressive governments adopted certain ideologies, value approaches, and stances that sought to ‘unmask’ for their students the ‘deceptions’ of the oppressive regime and to ‘debunk their racist myths’. Garbrecht (2006) also shows how elite schools that valued conformity and held particular kinds of social class aspirations motivated their students in ways that was solely focused on economic and social class progress and mobility.

In this respect, it is through the school that individuals get different kinds of knowledge, understanding and skills that they need to become adults. At school, they get the abstract knowledge of reasoning, the social knowledge of how to develop relationships, the practical knowledge of how to do things, the personal knowledge about what and who they are, and the general knowledge of what they need to navigate their everyday lives (Soudien, 2007:34).

#### **2.2.2.4. Schools and social context**

The social contexts of schools play crucial functions in shaping how individuals cope with schooling and move forward in their lives. Where schools are located and the predominant communities these schools serve, often influence the ways in which individuals experience schooling. These contexts are where particular information, ideas and passions grow and help influence the ways students think and live at those schools. They are also where, as Ortner (2003:90-91) notes, “their lives of emotion, which is historical like anything else, can get particularly warped”.

Social context operates through the ways in which attached communities and families set ‘standards’ for themselves and their children, their personal histories, the available role models, the types of jobs that various family members have, and the opportunities available (in terms of jobs and life choices) within these environments (Johnson, 1992:105). Also, it is this availability of funds, social class dispositions and attitudes of parents, and the ways in which the political and social clout of different parents intersect with the ethos of their schools and the organisational competencies and capabilities present in the school, that most influences school processes of knowledge creation and utilisation (Hargreaves, 1999:125).

Other variables such as student ratios and the kinds of teacher expertise available, alongside the predominant group composition and genders of students and their social class and home backgrounds and environments, further play critical roles in defining how students experience schooling and how they connect with atmospheres that leave lasting imprints on their lives (Murray & Mason, 1997; Deal & Peterson, 2009; Ortner, 2003). Indeed, within such schools, ordered, competitive and achieving environments are often associated with particular forms of regulated school leaderships, levels of qualifications of teachers, positive teacher attitudes, plentiful resources, and the schools being located in less stressful and less challenging neighbourhoods (Deal & Peterson, 2009). As such, it is the physical location or social context of the school or the kinds of environments that such schools create for their students, that most influence particular kinds of student experiences.

Notably, within these, no matter what the context of the school, teacher behaviour, ability and experience are key factors in the ways students experience and value their schooling (Murray & Mason, 1997). Levels of teacher experience and dedication at all schools, including how they develop instructional spaces and shape pedagogical practices pertinent to the particular social contexts of

their schools, fundamentally shape what students learn and what they take into their future lives (Entwisle, Kozeki & Tait, 1989).

#### **2.2.2.5. Other influences within schools**

School don't however achieve forms of socialisation solely through their structures, approaches, and attitudes. They also achieve these through the nature of their curricula, the particular dispositions of their teachers, the kinds of extra-curricular activities that they expose students to, and through particular school climates and contexts.

Firstly, schools instil in students, through their curricula, social norms, skills and knowledge as well as attitudes and behaviours through what are taught and how they are taught. For example, how schools provide courses of civic education, social studies, language, geography and history ultimately helps shape how students develop feelings of loyalty towards others (both the community and the nation) and how they understand their history, their roles, their challenges, and their approaches.

Secondly, through their actions and pedagogies at school it is teachers that indicate what is valued, who possess value, and what kinds of behaviour are rewarded. How they construct their daily classroom environments and their daily interactions with students, how they assess and provide feedback, how they enforce classroom rules and boundaries, what student behaviours they encourage and discourage, how they treat students, and how they address fellow colleagues, all contribute to student learning and help shape student identities (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010). As Noddings (2005) notes, it is also how teachers feel and think about their students and how they maintain caring relations with them that has lasting effects on their development, including how they think and feel about themselves.

Thirdly, whether students serve as prefects or monitors, or belong to debating societies, sports teams at school, or church groups, singing and dancing classes, political parties, civic groups, or reading societies, all shape how students behave, think, aspire and the kind of outlooks they have on life (Isin & Wood, 1999:17; Taylor, 1992:99; Dawson, 2003; Gills, 1994). It is thus both within schools, in extra-mural activities, and outside schools, in other informal learning spaces, that students learn, and where they develop their identities.

Lastly, students partake in particular forms of learning and meaning making through both the psychological dimension (school climate) and the anthropological dimension (the school culture) of

schools (Schein, 1985; 1996; Schlechty, 1997; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy & Feldman, 2003). These latter two dimensions play critical roles in student meaning making and socialisation.

#### **2.2.2.6. School Climates**

School climates are the *'hearts and souls'* of schools, namely the psychological and institutional attributes that give schools their personalities, and that produce the kinds of enduring qualities that the majority of members experience, absorb, and enact (Hoy & Miskel, 1987:226). They are the social atmospheres in which people interact with each other within particular kinds of school contexts, and comprise of:

the perceptions that people have of various aspects of the internal environment (safety, high expectations, relationships with teachers, students, parents and administrators), as well as the aspects of the school that influence behaviour. This includes the interpersonal relationships between people (Zepeda, 2004:37).

As such, school climates describe the nature of relationships established amongst teachers, students and parents that build trust and synergies (or destroy trust), resulting in each of the three parties becoming detached and disinterested in carrying out their expected duties and goals (Freiberg, 1999). School climates determine the different kinds of feelings that make school participants comfortable in their environment, and influence the degree to which individuals feel supported and safe in their learning. And school climates reflect the amount of positive or negative energy within school environments that affect learning outcomes.

#### **2.2.2.7. School Cultures**

School cultures, on the other hand, refer to the basic assumptions, beliefs and practices that members of the school community share. These influence their interactions and responses (Sergiovanni, 1998) and frame how they shape the ways in which schools view themselves and their environments. Each school culture, according to Stoll (2000:9), "acts as a screen or lens through which the world is viewed" and reflects a particular stakeholder reality.

School cultures shape the operations and functions of schools and affect the ways people in schools think, perform and learn. They serve as a social record of institutional learning, as well as lessons about human nature that inform how they implement their roles and responsibilities effectively. Indeed, it is within the ways in which teachers and students engage with each other that school

cultures wield their authoritative and omnipresent influence over everything (Goodlad, 1984). This pertains to how staff dress (Peterson & Deal, 1998), what staff talk about in the teachers' lounge (Kottler, 1997), how teachers decorate their classrooms, teacher emphasis on certain aspects of the curriculum, and teacher willingness to change (Hargreaves, 1999).

Importantly, school cultures don't fall from the sky, nor are they haphazardly produced. Rather, they are created, and have their own governing ideologies of language, values, norms and customs. These both suggest that school cultures can't ever be identical, and that people within schools can easily manipulate them (Patterson, Purkey & Parker, 1986:98). "Alike as schools may be in many ways", Goodlad (1984:81). observes, "each school has an ambience (or culture) of its own and, further, its ambience may suggest to the careful observer useful approaches to making it a better school" (In this, schools create the parameters within which their participants operate, with a particular reality or mind-set of school life that says: 'this is the way we do things around here' (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Furthermore, school cultures are shaped by the history, context and the people that have over time inhabited particular schools (Hollins, 2008). They exhibit how things are done and have been done over time, and act as screens or lenses through which schools are regarded. They operate as a source of authority, responsibility and aspiration, thus influencing how material culture is understood at different schools (Herbig & Dunphy, 1998:5). They are also denoted in various ways, whether verbal, behavioural and visual, and are illustrated via school mottos, songs, statements of purpose and goals or underlying philosophies, the stories people tell about the ways schools operate, the myths of schools, the metaphors that teachers use in their conversations, the procedures, ceremonies, rules, regulations, rewards, sanctions, structures and curricula of schools, and school symbols, uniforms, facilities and icons (Peterson & Deal, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 2009).

#### **2.2.2.8. School cultures and identity making**

For this dissertation the concept of school cultures is a particularly important issue. This is because they are the webs of rituals and traditions, norms and values that not only affect how schools operate but also what students take away with them when they leave school.

This dissertation argues that school cultures enable students with particular sets of skills that help them meet adult-world challenges with different adaptive realities and pressures. School cultures influence what students pay attention to (focus) in their lives, how they identify who and what to

associate with (commitment), how hard they work (motivation), and how they chart pathways in their minds on ways to achieve their goals (production) (Peterson & Deal, 2009). It is also school cultures that deeply influence the imaginations of students, and are forever burned, like tattoos, on the memory banks of most adults (Ortner, 2003).

Indeed, the ‘value’ of school cultures lies in how they assimilate and socialise all school participants. They shape how teachers both work with each other and with students in ways that acculturate them all to the ‘ways of the school’ – through the language used, the ways in which attention and respect are demanded, and how students and educators interpret and respond to setbacks and difficulties in the everyday life of the school. Ortner (2003:105) notes that all these experiences and outlooks create an abiding and unforgettable set of memories in different (past) students. School cultures are also how certain beliefs become entrenched and persist even after radical changes occur in national, regional or local school environments and policies, or how good ways of teaching or cultures become firm parts of the ways schools function long after teachers and students have left the schools (Aldrich & Marsden, 1988).

Importantly however, school cultures don’t exist or operate outside of history or geographical space. Ortner (2003) cautions that when exploring the notion of school cultures, attention should always be given both to the dominant factors and stereotypes that shape the perceptions of students and their parents, and to the historical conditions under which these factors and stereotypical assessments became dominant and pervasive. In her book, *New Jersey Dreaming* Ortner (2003) shows for example how different communities place different values and focus on particular issues at different historical moments. She notes that the value, for instance, that Jewish parents at Weequahic High School in New York, USA attached to learning in the 1950s was not rooted in some eternal ‘Jewish culture’ or tied to some kind of ‘cultural capital’ or understanding of achievement, but was historically specific and influenced by the increasing assimilation of Jews into Post-war American society (alongside the decline in anti-Semitism) at that time.

In this respect there exist a number of helpful historical works like Ortner’s (2003) that engage with the kinds of issues that the dissertation explores and that highlight key issues around how identity, student agency, and school structures intersect in relation to different schools. In engaging with three such works to illustrate some of the main issues, the section below utilises the way in which these historical works have framed how race, class, gender, geographical location and religion is

framed and described in other contexts. The purpose of doing this is to set up the second half of the chapter, namely an engagement with literature and explanations that highlight and point to the historical context under which the dissertation case study and its descriptions played themselves out in the period 1968-1990.

### **2.2.3. History, student identity, agency, and social structure**

How do issues of race, class, religion, identity, history, politics, economy, and school culture influence what and how students learn, perceive and view the world around them, as well as who they become? This part of Section A focuses on the concepts and definitions of social class, race, culture, location, and religion in order to provide important conceptual hooks with which to read the narratives later in the dissertation. In that regard, the section points to three similar historical works regarded as particularly useful to understand the various concepts used in the dissertation.

The works of Sherry Ortner (2003), Janet McCalman (1993) and Nadine Dolby (2001) were particularly helpful in understanding and contextualising social class, race, culture and religion in three other settings, and in three different periods, with each presenting different ways in which social class, race, religion, and context intersected, and each of them privileging a category by which to highlight their main argument.

Ortner (2003), in *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58*, provides a narrative of the journeys of a group of her school classmates (in the period from the 1950s into the 1990s) as they moved from school to work, following in particular the movement of those from modest working-class and middle-class backgrounds into the wealthy upper-middle or professional/managerial class. In doing so Ortner (2003) shows what went into the creation of the Weequahic High School Class of 1958 and what certain members of the school class of '58 made of themselves. Highlighting the complex workings of social class and its cultural manifestations in family, school and work, and showing the combination of social background and individual agency in tandem with historically specific movements, Ortner (2003) reveals how these 'pushed and pulled' class members in ways that allowed them to 'make' their own futures. Ortner's (2003:12) purpose in her study is to better understand "the workings of class and culture in ordinary lives and ordinary times" and how issues of class, culture, identity politics, race relations and social movements in the USA at that time influenced the decisions and choices of different individuals.



McCalman (1993), in *Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-class Generation, 1920-1990*, reveals how religion, social class, gender and historical moment influenced the learning and life trajectories of students from four schools in Australia. Elucidating how historical moment framed the opportunities, thinking, and social class of the students differently, McCalman explores the 1920s depression, the Second World War, and much later the commercialism of the 1980s and its influence on student lives. McCalman's (1993:11) goal is to show that social class does not "grow by itself" but "like all identities and social categories are socially and historically constructed and reconstructed out of the amorphous misdistribution of resources and other forms of capital in ordinary social life".

McCalman's (1993) further purpose is to illustrate the fluidity of class, noting that social class fluctuates in its meaning for different people in diverse situations and circumstances at different times, and that human agency is crucial when engaging with the limitations of circumstance – for better or worse. In showing how middle-class Protestants in Melbourne, with no qualifications but much experience and reputation, rose to the social level of middle-class, (McCalman, 1993:70) observes that: "this was not a class born with a silver spoon in its mouth. Rather it was a class of self-made men and women and whether by study or business they rose because they had worked for it".

In the third book, *Constructing Race, Youth, Identity and Popular Culture in South Africa*, Dolby (2001) illustrates the complex workings of social class and race in 1990s South Africa and how this 'spoke to' the identities of students at one high school in the province of KwaZulu Natal. Dolby (2001) reveals how race and social class was lived in the 1990s at the previously whites-exclusive school, Fernwood High, and the complex ways in which students continued to segregate themselves at the school after 1994. Using the Bourdieuan (1984) concept of 'taste', Dolby (2001:3) notes that "in this new context of globalization, fashion, and style" it was ultimately 'taste' complete with 'ancestry' and geography that served as pivotal variables in the elaboration of youth identities. Dolby (2001) shows how this was shaped by the local and global context in which race and social class was being rearticulated at the time, through a nexus of taste practices where:

Taste is simultaneously flimsy and unstable. Its borders move and shift on occasion, it ceases to be reproductive, instead taste points to and illuminates the breaks and changes in the racial constructions of selves. Youth use taste in conflicting ways: to reproduce their positions within racialised structures and simultaneously to challenge those positions, cracking open spaces for the emergence of new identities, locations and forms (Dolby, 2001:67).

For Dolby (2001:8) the concept of race in South Africa became rearticulated after 1994 into a complex combination of old privilege, social class formation, and group construction. Her aim in the book is thus to show how the use of the concept of race after 1994 was not about discarding or embracing already-formed race categories but about how these were renegotiated in a context that was no longer formally tied to apartheid-driven cultural absolutes. In observing how race continued to organise the daily engagements and identities of students at Fernwood High, Dolby (2001:61) reveals how the concept of race took on a different form after 1994 as a ground for politics and also as a category for the organisation of daily life.

Notably, each of the three works provided ways of reading social class, race, culture, geography, and religion that were particularly useful for the dissertation, and led to a variety of conceptualisations and descriptions being identified in each category, which is individually explored below.

#### **2.2.4. Changing forms of social class**

The concept of social class generally evokes the idea of groups or collectives tied to some form of social structure that, via income, economic resources and occupation, organises the social, cultural, and material world of these groups, communities, or individuals.

Following the classical Marxist position, social class has since the 19<sup>th</sup> century commonly been understood as the relationship of different groups of people to the means of production, with the main classes being the owners (bourgeoisie) and the workers (proletariat), and additional groups recognised as occupying ambiguous spaces between the two (Marx & Engels, 1848:49). This conceptualisation is historically tied to the reorganisation of society that followed the industrial revolution and the creation of new classes in a transformed class structure that became allocated on the basis of *ability* rather than birth (Edgell, 1993:2).

With the development of industrial capitalism and as a way of showing that over time classes benefitted differently from knowledge and skills, Max Weber expanded this for the 20<sup>th</sup> century into a broader definition of social stratification - where he recorded the division of society into a number of hierarchically arranged strata (Lareau & Conley, 2008:13). For Weber social class referred to the amount and source of income that determined people's life chances but which also located them within the different strata. Making a distinction between class (based on income and occupation) and status (claims to prestige), social class for Weber (1968 cited in Scott & Nilsen, (2013:154) was

the actual social strata that is formed through the aggregate clustering of class and status situations on the basis of similarities in the patterns of association found among the occupants, the solidarity that these people are able to achieve, and the common consciousness that they have as members of a common social class. Social classes – as strata – lie one above another in a social hierarchy of differential life chances and life experiences

Adopting a typically precise and contained approach to the meaning of ‘social class’, theorists like Marx (1848), Weber (1968), Goldthorpe (1996), Marshall (1997), and Wright (2005) all argued that social class is but one important aspect of the social distribution of power in society, but that it is through class that the life chances of individuals, as causally determined by the actions of others, is mainly calibrated.

In more recent times however, scholars like Lareau (2003), Lareau and Conley (2008), Crompton and Scott (2000), Ball (2006), Savage (2000), and Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) have argued for a more expanded and transformed approach to social class that also captures the shared culturally-based *expectations* of different groups of people. They argue that social class should be viewed as “practices of living” and “as the social and psychic practices through which ordinary people live, survive, and cope” (Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody, 2001:27). Conley (2008:367) asserts that “in an age when cultural, social, human, bodily, and financial capital are fluid and exchangeable”, recognising the equally structuring effects of social class and *the ways it is lived out or done* (Ball, 2006:7) would appear to be a more robust approach.

The books we read, our travel destinations and modes of travel, the films we see, clothes we wear, foods we eat, where our children go to school, the ‘look’ and ‘feel’ of home and school-based interventions if our children ‘fail’, where we live and the nature of our housing, under what expectations for success our children live and taken for granted funding, where we feel most comfortable and with whom, sports our children play and with whom, whether we have health insurance – Individuals and collectivities create and live class in response to such realities (Weiss, 2008:3).

Social class, according to Ortner (2003), needs to be approached not only as “part of the matter of economic gradations of goods and privilege” but also as almost entirely embedded in narratives of snobbery and humiliation and within rituals of living”. Social class must thus not only be understood as embedded in Marxist narratives of irreconcilable differences between owners and workers, but

also within narratives of personal success and failure” (Ortner, 2003:41). Steinberg (1991:175) further notes that:

Class eventuates as men and women live out their productive relations and as they experience their determinate situations within ‘the ensemble of social relations’, with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways.

For this dissertation, it is thus argued that social class is not a “natural or objective object” but “is culturally and discursively constructed and involves processes of identification, perception, and feeling” (McCalman, 1993:11; Medhurst, 2000:20). Social class is fluid - having no clear strata boundaries - and is thus something that develops, enacts, locates, positions, differentiates, and fluctuates. It is also achieved (through social mobility), exercised (through social stratification), contested (class struggle), struggled over, protected (social closure), desired (class aspiration), and lived. As such, as Ball (2003:6-7) notes, “we think and are thought by social class – it is enacted rather than something that just is”.

Furthermore, as Charlesworth (2000:65) observes, social class is fundamentally a “phenomenon of the flesh” and “a coming to inhabit the world in certain ways through powerfully internalizing senses based on an objective hierarchy of relations within which individual sensibilities take shape”. Social class concerns processes of desire and aversion through which individuals come to be located within certain social fields, where feelings thereof are often raw, visceral, painful and ambivalent (Savage, 2000; Skeggs, 2004). In the sections below, some of the above dimensions of social class are explored with specific regard to school students, and how they most likely experience it.

#### **2.2.4.1. Social class is historical**

Skeggs (1997:5) defines class as a “discursive and historically specific construction”. He asserts that social class is a “product of middle-class political consolidation that involves projection about the future” and a clear imagining of its various elements. Social class as such does not ‘grow by itself’ but “like all identities and social categories is socially and historically constructed and reconstructed out of the amorphous misdistributions of resources and other forms of capital in ordinary social life” (Ortner, 2003:263). For students that come from diverse situations and circumstances, social class thus fluctuates in its meaning for each of them, and invariably leads to different forms of agency depending on the limitations of their circumstances – for better or worse (Ortner, 2003:41).

#### **2.2.4.2. Social class defines students**

Social class further defines students and acts as a component of their personal identities. It tells them who they are, what they can do, and what to do and what not to do. It is also social class that invariably informs their identity lifestyles – what they decide to do, consume, eat, drink and wear, what music they listen to, how they approach their religion, and how they spend their leisure time. Indeed, social class frames and directs their behaviour at school and at home in quite fundamental ways, as well as nurturing the ways in which they interact with and think about others (Bourdieu, 1987; Dolby, 2001; Ball, 2006).

Ortner (2003:13) observes that the social class of students further shapes their sense of self, their taste, and their picture of the world and its possibilities. What students wear and what kinds of motor vehicles their parents drive, as well as their notions of fashion and the music they listen to, are often seen to reflect their respective class tastes. These identities do not stand outside of social, economic and political structures, and are not a neutral matter of individual desire. Rather, they act as mediated preferences that reflect particular economic positions in society, and serve to produce particular class distinctions (Dolby, 2001:66).

Social class is also defined through aspects of language, pronunciation, speech, and interactions. It is more than simply acquiring nice homes, motorcars and smart clothes, but also about developing new life dispositions, such as changes in speech and deportment, habits and ideas (McCalman, 1993:75). Often the true mark of being middle-class for example is reflected in student exhibitions of education, where the traits of poor grammar, limited vocabulary, and rough colloquial speech mark certain students as being of a lower class or “simply common” (McCalman, 1993:137).

#### **2.2.4.3. Social class positions students**

As social class is a status hierarchy in which individuals and groups are classified on the basis of esteem and prestige acquired mainly through economic success and accumulation of wealth, class positions students in particular ways. These positions are then produced, held, and experienced differently (Labaree, 1988).

Class for example determines what kinds of educational opportunities students can access, which schools they can attend, how they are perceived within the schools they get access to, and the kinds of life possibilities that are imagined for them after school. This access (or lack of access) to particular schools perpetuates the class divide between groups of students and also across generations,

categorising them into rankings of socio-economic tiers based on factors like wealth, income, social status, occupation and power (Aronowitz, 2003; Carter 2012).

This positioning is further reinforced by the kinds of school curricula students are given access to. Students who attend more affluent schools for instance are provided with quite different subject choices than students who attend schools in impoverished areas. These subject choices, and the ways they are taught, then give students access to particular kinds of jobs and professions, and are often designed to prepare them for low-level jobs and, in most cases, manual labour (Fiske, & Ladd, 2004).

#### **2.2.4.4. Social class locates students spatially and mentally**

Social class also locates students geographically and psychologically in terms of shared dispositions and interests. Their class identities are 'located' and developed through the ways their individual geographies of place are articulated and networked together at home and at school (Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst, 2004:208).

On the one hand, the areas where students attend school shape how they think about their lives and the importance they attach to themselves (Field, 2001). On the other, when they attend school together, geographical location also serves as a "major marker of class difference" where residential affluence positions students in relation to each other within schools in particular ways, and also influences how much time they spend at school, their security, transport, and access to resources like computers and libraries (Ortner, 2003; McCalman, 1993).

#### **2.2.4.5. Social class maintains and excludes**

Schools maintain social class by excluding different students from various sectors of life. This is done in a variety of ways, whether through the access fees that schools charge or the kinds of social networks that different students are able to develop at the schools they attend (Rassool, 2004; McCalman, 1993:113). In doing so, social class excludes students socially, culturally, educationally and politically through what they 'bring' with them into school, which then also entails how they behave at school (Bourdieu, 1986).

#### **2.2.4.6. Social class imprinted on the bodies of students**

Weis (2004:13) asserts that "social class is worn on our bodies as it seeps through our minds" and thus conceptualisations thereof have to include understanding the "practices of everyday living –

practices that both engaged in, by, and simultaneously encircled men, women, and children on a daily basis". As such, students don't live class as socially natural actors, but via other, more salient identities (Ortner, 2003:262). This includes the external world of cultural assumptions and social institutions that they inhabit without thinking too much about them, and an internalised version of that world that is a part of their identities, generating dispositions to feel, think, judge and act in certain ways.

In this regard, according to Ortner (2003:91), the body is the central site upon which social class is inscribed, and bodily dispositions are thus frequently read as signalling certain dispositions: "you can take the person out of the class, but you can't take the class out of the person".

#### **2.2.4.7. Social class can be achieved**

Yet, notwithstanding the above, in given situations students do achieve certain levels of class positioning via forms of mobility that are both contingent and strategically dependent on their access to assets and different forms of capitals. Undoubtedly, social class is deeply hierarchical - in that those with economic possessions occupy high positions and those without economic possessions invariably occupy lower positions- and the social class of individuals does significantly impact on their various opportunities (Aronowitz, 2003). However, students can climb the 'class ladder' via education, social networks, marriage or mere chance opportunities (McCalman, 1993:113). That is because, as Ball (2006) observes, social class is struggled over daily in the lives of families and institutions, and in the consumptive decisions that they make at moments of crisis, contradiction and desire. They 'do class' by learning how to react in defining moments (Devine, 2004), and changing things like their social and physical location. In so doing, they reconfigure and renegotiate their places in the labour market, and their relation to issues of family, consumption, social work, politics, legal work and education.

#### **2.2.4.8. Social class can be altered**

Social class also fluctuates. Connell (1983:148) notes that "we are not always the same, or always able to be the same as the world around us changes. Real-world classes are constantly being constructed around us with people constantly 'doing class'". In this respect, social class is dynamic rather than static, lived, formed and challenged, and encompasses processes of inclusion and exclusion at different times (Devine & Savage, 2005:13).

#### **2.2.4.9. Social class can be aspired and desired**

Furthermore, social class is determined by individual aspirations. While social class does often influence the opportunities and aspirations of students, as well as their desires and fears, in quite negative ways, it invariably also affords them access to 'ways of knowing' about the world (e.g. market knowledge, lifestyles, communication and interactional styles), which changes their relationship to patterns of educational privilege and inequality (Archer & Francis 2006:32). On the one hand, students can become aware of particular relationships between social positions and possible lifestyles and begin to anticipate probable and realistic educational and occupational outcomes for themselves (Marjoribanks, 2002:8; Bourdieu, 1987). On the other, students can also find ways of accessing resources like local churches that provide them with the social and economic networks that they need to progress, and use these in imaginative ways that lead to new forms of 'knowing' (Yosso, 2005).

#### **2.2.4.10. Social class as a changing narrative**

In the end, social class is really about the narratives, motifs and characteristics of students. It is the amalgam of features of particular cultures and dispositions that are read and inscribed onto their bodies (Skeggs, 2004:117). While these can invariably create different kinds of feelings, e.g. lowliness, humiliation, feeling small, low, humiliated, envy (or fending off those feelings in relation to those who have more goods, money and status), it is about how difference and context is understood and read that will determine what students do and what they become (Ortner, 2003:47).

The above discussion has highlighted that social class is critically lived inside and outside of students, determining both their behaviour, thinking, and choices and the kinds of opportunities they are able to access. Notably, social class often means different things in different places, and thus it is how the concept is approached that can potentially reconfigure what happens in the lives of different students. For instance, in a working-class area, if one is dressed well and speaks English one may be regarded as being middle-class. However, that same individual may be viewed as working-class in a different, more middle-class environment.

History reveals that individuals and items have different weights or values at different times. Importantly, there is a close connection between class and race. Like social class, race can also be approached as an internal experience of an external construction, as outlined in the following section.



### 2.2.5. The subtleties of race

For the purposes of this dissertation it is also critically important to understand the complex relationship between social class and race. Ortner (2003:51) argues in this regard that the category of race in the USA, for example, is not simply a discourse of 'natural' identities, but also often functions as a key site of displacement of social class and crypto-class discourse. In this she points out that notions of whiteness or blackness have a hidden social class referent, where WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) are almost always assumed in casual American discourse to be upper class, and where in the 1950s and 1960s the Jewish community in much of the United States were regarded as middle-class even though a substantial number of them were raised in working class families. This suggests quite insidious understandings of whiteness and blackness over different historical periods, where 'working-class/middle-class/upper-class and white' always seems to be better than 'black and any class'.

Indeed, a key question within current debates in the literature focuses on why it is that at all levels of the class structure strong links are still mainly found in the lower categories between particular racial groups and social inequality and disadvantage (Back & Solomons, 2009; Goldberg, 2014). Mainly, it is argued, in a modern world where it is currently unacceptable to distinguish groups of people according to genetic or physical characteristics (or race) (Dolby, 2001; Soudien, 2004), too many discussions about social inequality still continue to infer or call up socially constructed notions of racial difference.

The latter is so because, despite the meaning of the term race altering substantially over the last sixty years, the contacts between the same previously dominant and oppressed groups and communities have remained much the same - deeply unequal and exploitative (Hall, 1992). And just as beliefs about the different capacities and superiorities of distinct races under European expansion and colonial rule were previously used to explain and justify the sharp inequalities within colonial societies between Europeans and indigenous communities, so too in the current era, are the supposedly distinctive characteristics of racial identity, used to explain the current state of despair of particular communities (Badroodien, 2001). In this respect, variations in appearance have remained as key markers of difference, but now supposedly bound up in the abilities and outlooks of different groups.

This suggests that remnants of old scientific accounts (that race is natural and obvious) continue to be treated as common sense as to how different groups understand their worlds and conduct their lives (Gould, 1984). Giddens (2006:485) cautions in this regard that there are many people in the current world who still believe that humans can be readily separated into biologically different races. Despite its supposed scientific basis having been completely debunked, the salience of ‘race as difference’ continues to hold significant sway in many current debates (Omi & Winant, 1994).

#### **2.2.5.1. The Concept of Race**

Certainly, race remains ever-present in our current world. It is outside on the streets and also inside people. It is part of the way the world operates and also part of who people are and how they operate. It plays a pivotal part in the global world and is threaded into its regimes of power, but is also caught up in the everyday mundane connections between people and place, and people and each other. Race organises the social world at the level of the global, the structural, and the personal, and is ingrained in the texture of people’s social lives and in their everyday routine activities. In scope and scale race remains simultaneously personal and built into the fabric and structures of wider society. Indeed, the continued power of the concept of race lies in the subtle force it continues to provide in people’s thinking, actions, and practices, and in the effect it has on the ways their lives are organised (Buechler, 2008; Loveman, 1999).

Part of the explanation for this is that race and race-making is essentially about people. They are the motor of race-making and it is in the myriad of their ordinary everyday social processes and mechanisms (that don’t operate in any predictable way) that race takes much of its meaning (Knowles, 2003:25). As such, race is not as much a ‘big picture’ global construction, but one that is bound up in the operation of everyday human agency.

Indeed, Gilroy (2007) and Hall (1996) assert that the historical and political constructs of race have become so deeply permeated into identity-making processes that these constructs of race no longer need a particular discourse to exist, with reformulated frames of identification and reference being used to give race new meaning. Hall (1996:3) further notes that the concept of race was constructed over time, and thus racialised identities are “not a matter of what is ‘true’ (my emphasis), but what has been made to be true”, and what is now taken to be common sense.

In this regard, Hall (1997:53) reminds that race is not “a question of pigmentation, but is a historical, political and cultural category about which people have had to make sense at specific times in

history”, to the extent that race does not need to be “inscribed on their skins” anymore to make people “black in their heads”.

This is an important point to highlight. If race as a concept of scientific difference has been thoroughly debunked and currently considered a social myth in the political landscape (Friedman, 1995; Simon, 1995), then why and how does it continue to contribute so powerfully to the framing of the above sets of social distinctions?

The point is that while race may be social and political constructs it owes its longevity to the ways in which meaning is made in the manufacture of identities and the vocabularies that race-making has provided over time to inform who different people are and who they become (Knowles, 2003:29).

#### **2.2.5.2. Race and social analysis**

In the end, it must be acknowledged that subjecting race as a concept and construct to critical analysis and discussion is a tricky business. That is because often the same discussions and analyses meant to critique the discredited ‘race as biology concept’ often reifies race through the ways it identifies, names, and engages with the related subjects. Even the alternative used in the literature, namely the substitution of the term ‘race’ with the term ‘ethnicity’ - where ethnic differences are explained as cultural and not physical and where ethnicity is seen to encompass shared traditions, experiences and ways of life - has not resolved the tendency to reinforce identity difference. In fact, in many cases the qualities used to characterise or describe ethnic groups have often been quite similar to those applied previously to racial groups, meaning that the term ethnicity has further contributed to reinforcing older fixed ‘racial’ explanations.

In this regard, Theo Goldberg (1993) suggests that race as a concept needs to be approached as a discourse of ‘ways of knowing and talking about the world’ around three key things, namely (1) how thought, action, and representation is promoted; (2) how identities are constructed; and (3) how social relationships are structured. Approaching race in this way, he argues, provides ways of understanding how systems of meaning are produced, how power is shown to operate, how these work for groups and individuals, and in whose interests these operate. If approached in this way, race offers analytical value through showing how the practical world operates around us, how people, their emotions, their routine activities and the manner in which they experience the world co-exist in ways that constantly remind them about human difference. Race has a grammar that is

inscribed in structures, on communities, on the bodies of individuals, and in how people think about the world, and it is this grammar that requires deep analysis.

It is also important to concede that engaging the concept of race as both a social and political construct and one that is made and sustained by individual agency is not a contradiction. As Knowles (2003:29-30) notes:

Racial categories characterising political landscapes could not be developed and sustained unless they were meaningful for, and acted on, by human agents in the conduct of their everyday lives. They are very effective in the making of who we are in the world and what we do in it. Race has meaning both in social and political organisation and in human action.

For this dissertation, the value of engaging with the concept of race is that race has always been a core ingredient within most conflicts and inequities across the world, contributing substantially to how identity is made in different contexts. Whether in the USA, Europe, Australasia, the Middle East, the Far East, or Africa (where the Rwandan conflict and apartheid South Africa are the most recent examples), race (or difference) has always been fundamental to how identities have been reproduced and understood.

Race is also a concept that oppressed communities have consistently grappled with, fought against, and sought alternative ways of conceptualising. In this regard, the subsection below reveals how race becomes a performed object by using the example of apartheid South Africa. The purpose is to show how the state and state structures are complicit in deploying the concept of race in ways that consolidate and maintain power in the hands of powerful elites. Importantly, under apartheid race operated to keep the white population in power, both politically and socially, and in the minds and personal lives of oppressed subjects (Dolby, 2001:22).

#### **2.2.5.3. How race is lived**

Just twenty-two years ago South Africa was governed by an apartheid system of forced segregation based on race. Under apartheid every South African was classified into one of four racial categories, namely white (descendants of both European male and female immigrants), African (descendants of both indigenous male and female populaces), Indian (descendants of both Indian male and female immigrants), and coloured (people whose descent is traced from members of more than one race). The white South African group that comprised of about 13% of the population ruled the country,

while the coloured, African and Indian groups had no vote and no representation in central or provincial government. The majority of South Africa's population (those designated as African) was herded into homelands in impoverished and barren rural areas, where they were treated as reservoirs of cheap labour that could work as migrants in urban and city spaces and industrial hubs provided they acquired 'work passes' to do so (Giddens, 2006:482). Segregation based on race was enforced at all levels of society whether in public places such as beaches, malls, movie houses, civic centres, washrooms, or railway and bus carriages or more private spaces such as residential areas, homes, and schools. Understandings of 'knowing your place and race' were emblazoned into every part of everyday living (Field, 2001:23). Furthermore, while apartheid was mainly encoded in law and ever-present in the ways it was threaded through all structures and processes of society, it was also brutally enforced through law enforcement and security organs that freely resorted to violence to suppress all resistance to the apartheid regime (Worden, 2011).

Race was inscribed into all structures of society through apartheid laws like the Group Areas Act (1950), the Population Registration Act (1950), the Mixed Marriages Act, and the Bantu Education Act (1953) to ensure that each group knew that they were unequal (Fullard, 2004; Harris, 2004; Makhalemele & Molewa, 2005). In this regard, towns and cities were segregated into white, coloured, Indian, and African areas, and arranged in a finely graded racial hierarchy, with white people at the centre (occupying high-value properties in the dominant central business districts and in the surrounding residential suburbs), Africans at the periphery (in townships on the outskirts of cities) and coloured people and Indians somewhere in between in subordinate central business districts and in intermediate residential areas (Davies, 1981). Life in the African townships was harsh, characterised by widespread poverty and unemployment and a dearth of facilities such as electricity, water, waste removal and sewerage. The African and coloured township schools were renowned for being poorly resourced and overcrowded with under-qualified teachers, while the white suburbs and schools were well always resourced (Molewa & Molewa, 2005).

The everyday visibility of white power, control, privileges, and adored lifestyles played an important part in how the 'other' racial groups viewed their own limited schooling opportunities, aspirations and lives (Kallaway, 1984). This process was one that is generally referred to as racialisation, where understandings of race are used to classify individuals or groups of people and where social institutions treat people differently and in a de facto manner. "A racialised system is when aspects of the daily lives of individuals – employment, personal relations, housing, healthcare, education and

legal representation- become shaped and constrained by their perceived positions within that system” (Giddens, 2006:487).

To saliently illustrate this, Adhikari (2009) uses the example of the coloured population to show how race characteristics became naturalised under apartheid. He observes that in pre-apartheid times the coloured population was defined as belonging to a ‘mixed race’, and under apartheid as a residual identity, ‘neither black nor white’, according to the Population Registration Act (1950). However, although they were mainly treated as a heterogeneous collection of individuals “lumped together for administrative purposes” on the racial hierarchy in the apartheid period, the coloured population was racialised in the ways that they were described, namely as marginalised, resourceless, and lower-class (Badroodien, 2001). This ‘residual identity’ with its variety of negative characteristics thus defined how students saw themselves and how they took up particular visions and possibilities for the future (Erasmus, 2001:18). Indeed, it was the social descriptions more than the racial category that served to shape their social relations and accommodation within apartheid society (Adhikari, 2009: xvii).

In response many coloured students under apartheid thus produced alternative identities in relation both to other groups as well as those within the coloured group. In this way, race was institutionalised as a key dimension of power and inequality and became the main source of identity formation and division amongst the South African population (Kallaway, 1984).

Importantly, at the same time that the concept of race in South Africa was fundamentally about how different groups engaged separately with their everyday realities, it was also about who acknowledged or refused to acknowledge the racial categories that ‘made’ them different and unequal (Posel, 2001). Wieder (2005:508) notes in this regard that in interviews with teachers in Cape Town, he was told that:

we had to defend the children, make them understand what the rulers were trying to do, and why. And this meant providing political education as well to counter retribulizing as a way of making their divide-and-rule policy possible and easier. Our main lesson was ‘we are one human race there are no superior and no inferior races. Cut out all the rubbish the rulers are trying to make you believe.

Race was therefore heavily contested and made and remade in different contexts and spaces. For the dissertation, the discussion of race brings into view one of the key variables under apartheid that

students and others grappled with on a daily basis, and that informed their thinking as they transitioned into adult life.

### **2.2.6. Religion and Secularism**

Similar to race and class as discussed above, religion works in the ordinary lives of people and greatly influences their thinking, choices, identity and relationships. Religion operates at various levels and gives people the opportunity to connect in particular ways, binding them together into cooperative communities organised around deities, and determining their behaviour and aspirations by underscoring the identified morals to be maintained (Graham & Haidt, 2010). Religion further serves to give individuals a sense of respectability which

is particularly important for those who are denied social recognition ... or have suffered downward mobility. It is supposed that being a good Christian, Muslim or Buddhist brings respect within the religious community as within religious groups, there are typically opportunities for leadership and service that brings prestige (Foner & Alba, 2008:362).

In this way, religion provides ways of claiming “respect and recognition as a ‘proper’ person by the surrounding society” (Hansen, 2009:193).

Furthermore, religion also provides people with “resistant capital” (Yosso, 2005:80). When a group’s desires are ignored or opposed, they often come together to defy authority and stand their ground to have their goals realised (Atran & Norenzayan, 2004). As such, religion can determine individual preferences, aspiration and identities in ways that separate them from other communities. Ortner (2003:64) highlights in her study in the USA how “many Jewish kids absorbed the idea that liaisons with non-Jewish others was unthinkable, even terrifying”. These beliefs made integration an abomination.

It is for this reason that secularism is also often seen as a particularly attractive alternative variable in the identity making process, and as a ‘better’ pathway to engage with social inequality. Rasmussen (2010:702) asserts that:

Secularism is central to the Enlightenment narrative in which reason progressively frees itself from the bonds of religion and in so doing liberates humanity. This narrative poses religion as a regressive force in the world, one that in its dogmatism is not amenable to change, dialogue, or non-violent conflict resolution. This Enlightenment narrative separates

secularism from religion and through this separation claims that secularism, like reason, is universal (in contrast to the particularism of religion).

Secularisation is associated with the modernisation of society as it became more reliant on scientific explanation and technology to control and explain the social world. For this dissertation, this is a particularly important distinction as debates about secularism and religion played a key role in the identity making process amongst the study's subjects. Both concepts of religion and secularism are crucial elements within the school environment, and inform the interactions, thinking, aspirations and identities of students in quite crucial ways.

### **2.2.7. Transition**

The previous sections focused on how the historical, sociological, political, social, economic and schooling contexts influence the learning of students, their identities, their thinking, and their world outlook. To conclude Section A, this subsection looks at how learning at school also plays a key role in the transition of students into adulthood. What do students learn at school and what parts of this identity-making process do they take with them as they *transition* into their adult lives?

In the literature the concept transition is mainly driven by two key assumptions, namely that (1) successful transition needs to follow a linear pathway; and (2) individuals can choose their own transition pathways (Riele, 2004:244). The first assumption treats the world of the school and the world of work as two separate and distinct points on the timeline of student lives (Looker & Dwyer, 1998:5-6). The second assumption does not recognise the influence of social context and other contextual factors on the different choices available to students on exiting school (te-Riele, 2004:244), nor the influence of changes in the labour market or associated policy shifts.

For this dissertation, it is argued that transition should not be regarded as a linear process since such an approach fails to recognise the fluidity and complexity of the lives of individuals (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002:518; Ball, Maguire & Macrae, 2001). There are simply too many other factors in the lives of students that shape what they get to do, and what they seek to do.

In this regard, there are three models within the literature that try to connect learning and the processes of meaning-making within given educational and social systems that students take into their future lives (O' Kane, 2007). These models include the communities of practice model (Lave &



Wenger, 1991), the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1992), and the socio-cultural model (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; 1987).

The first model emphasises three basic concepts, namely the negotiation of meaning, participation, and reification as a way of explaining how both classroom and school activities and student location within their communities guide students to their future roles (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The second model provides a five-tier systemic description of how students engage with learning; starting with relationships in the home environment (Dockett & Perry, 2003:9), engagement with the social environment, the influence of external environments, the influence of particular cultures on student thinking and choices (Fulcher, 200) or the “temporal changes in the environments of students that produce new conditions that affect their development” (Berk, 2000:30). In this model the student’s life is comprised of multi-connected systems, all of which have some degree of effect on the student’s thinking and future lives. The third model originates in the work of Vygotsky (1962; 1978) and suggests that students are all active agents in their own learning. It notes that human capabilities are transformed by environmental cultures that then play a key role in informing students what to learn, and how to use this learning. For this dissertation these three models offer important ways of understanding what past students say about what they take from the school, and from their learning there, into their subsequent lives. This is explored in later chapters.

The next section (B) links the examination of the various factors (above) that shape student learning and thinking, as well as their meaning-making, to a brief overview of Cape Town history in the period 1968 to 1990. This is done in order to position the historical and political context of Victoria High in relation to the learning, identity-making, and lives of the ‘student subjects’ explored in the study.

## **2.3. SECTION B:**

### **2.3.1. The history of Cape Town, South Africa**

For this dissertation it is critical to understand some of the history of Cape Town as education does not exist in a vacuum but always in a social, economic and political context. The education that students receive fundamentally reflects political and economic realities at different times that determine the kinds of changes that are possible in society, politics and economic life at those times (Mncwabe, 1990). The sections below thus provide a brief overview of some relevant Cape Town history as a way of showing how the choices of the city inhabitants are informed and often

constrained by context, history, and opportunities (Field, 2001). Accordingly, highlighting the history of Cape Town and the structure of the society is also aimed at providing a broader picture of the education system and how it was organised under apartheid to uphold the ideology of the state (as well as how it variously influenced the different students' feelings, thoughts, imaginations and actions).

### **2.3.1.1. The beautiful Easter egg**

Cape Town is a renowned multi-racial city at the tip of Africa with abundant resources that has attracted many immigrants since the Dutch East India Company's colonisation of the Cape in 1652 (Saunders, 1988). Since then Cape Town has survived a long history of Dutch and English colonial occupation as well as almost fifty years of apartheid rule.

With Table Mountain at its epicentre surrounded by fantastic sceneries and beautiful beaches on both the Atlantic and Indian ocean sides, the Mother City (as its affectionately called) has a bustling business district and lots of sprawling mansions and luxurious residences scattered across the mountain areas from Simon's Town to Noordhoek to Hout Bay to Camps Bay to Oranjezicht around to Devils Peak and all the way across to Constantia and Tokai. This grandeur and opulence is sharply contrasted by the overcrowded flats-type and shack settlements that are steeped in poverty and indigency in the area generally known as the Cape Flats (Arendse & Gunn, 2010:7).

The Cape Flats comprises the largest geographical area of Cape Town. Initially mainly populated by a coloured (59%) and very small Indian population, in the years since 1994 this area is now also inhabited by large numbers of an African (34%) population (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The Cape Flats is a sandy, low-lying, flood-prone and flat area that the Cape government in the 1930s reported was totally uninhabitable. Yet, in 2011 there were close to 150 000 formal dwellings on the same land, populated by almost 600 000 people. The average monthly income of 53% of the Cape Town population is R3 200 or less, and 70% if those earning up to R6 400 a month are included (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

Areas on the Cape Flats were mainly established as a result of the coming to power of the National Party in 1948, when local government sought to preserve the lush and well-located land close to the city for the white population. The passing of the Immorality Act (1950) and the Groups Areas Act in 1950, along with other apartheid laws, then led to the official classification of the city's population as coloured, Indian, white, and African, the designation of where these groups were allowed to live,

work, attend school, and the subsequent removal from the city area of large numbers of the population 'not-considered-white' to racially confined suburbs on the Cape Flats. Sub-standard housing and poorly installed services characterised these suburbs. To add to the pain of forced removals, areas like Retreat were named after iconic streets from District Six to remind uprooted residents of places they once belonged to (Arendse & Gunn, 2010:7).

Under early apartheid, members of the African population were not allowed to live or work in Cape Town, with those living in the city only allowed to stay there if they could show that they were employed and had passes stamped by their employers. Via the Coloured Labour Preference Laws of the Cape Province, employment was mainly reserved for the coloured population, though this remained cheap labour with very exploitative wages. Education laws enacted under apartheid such as the Bantu Education Act (1953), the Coloured Persons Education Act (1963), and the Indian Education Act (1965) also further guaranteed this marginality and separation, with children only allowed to attend school with 'people of their own colour' (Wieder, 2003:3; Field, 2001:22; Crankshaw, 2002).

As such, much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century life in Cape Town was characterised by bigotry, racism, and the projection of a particular form of white supremacy onto the minds of the majority population (Wieder, 2003:2). Wieder (2008:7) quoting Beinart (1994) notes that:

The state provided the stepping-stones for whites, both English and especially Afrikaans-speaking, to take power and entrench a system of racially based dominance that was unique in its rigidity. Segregation to 1948, and apartheid afterwards, were policies aimed not simply at separating white from black, but at regulating the way in which the indigenous population was drawn into a new society.

Additionally, the provision of higher levels of education from the 1950s was premised on the development of processes that would further validate and confirm white superiority. Curricula at schools were used to affirm given social structures and race hierarchies, with the academic curriculum for each group differentiated and aligned to the occupational and economic reality of the broader South African society. This emphasis is best shown in the 1954 speech of the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr HF Verwoerd:

There is no place for him [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. It is to no avail for him to receive a training that has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd. Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live (Lapping 1987:75; cited in Wieder, 2003:3).

Maurice (1957) refers to this as permanent osmosis between the political system and the educational system whereby the school served as an ideological institution. As such, the imagined 'kind of projected society' provided the main aims and objectives of schooling provision, with its contents and methods determined in accordance with the activities carried on in society for which it functioned (Jansen, 2001).

The apartheid government did however also acknowledge the social value of education and the role of the social in forms of control (Kallaway, 1984). It freely noted that while education would possibly expand the horizons of student knowledge and shape how they understood the structures of society and the ways that power relations permeated them beyond what was wanted, if regulated properly greater levels of education would enable many students to develop the kinds of skills and personal styles to fill and perform the jobs that were opening up, and that the apartheid government needed to be filled (Ryan, 2004).

#### **2.3.1.2. The Cape Way- education and work**

In accordance with the focus noted above, the period from the 1950s to the 1960s coincided with the introduction of a swathe of racially discriminatory legislation and policies that sought to protect white workers in the workplace. Nattrass and Seekings (2010:32) observe that this:

Further protected white workers from competition, limited the supply of skilled African, coloured and Indian labour, and favoured farming and the mines over manufacturing in terms of access to unskilled labour. It delivered inflated earnings and living standards for white South Africans, in part at the expense of black South Africans (wage increases for white manufacturing workers were compensated for by falling wages for non-white workers) and in part at the expense of future growth, as the economy became less and less competitive internationally.

During this period, employment in Cape Town was largely characterised by government-initiated large-scale programmes to promote the commercial cultivation of corn and wheat, as well as by a thriving manufacturing industry. State investment through the state-owned Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) led to the establishment of local textile, canning, and pulp and paper industries, as well as state corporations to produce fertilisers, chemicals, oil and armaments (Lipton, 1986). As the largest 'working' population, the coloured group in Cape Town from the late 1940s was largely expected to provide cheap labour in all these sectors.

It was also felt at the time that increased education levels would not only resolve the 'labour needs' of the city but also reduce the increasing levels of poverty and inequality in the city, and thereby promote limited upward mobility for some of the 'inferior races' (Badroodien, 2001). This was part of an international trend at that time where it was believed that more education would lead to a steady increase in the demand for educated workers, and that this demand would 'pull up those from the working-class into middle-class occupations, thus reducing poverty and inequality (Nash & Lauder, 2010:1). It was a powerful discourse that for much of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Cape Town both students and teachers were well aware of.

The following paragraphs focus on the socio-economic context of South Africa, and thus Cape Town, between 1960 and 1990.

### **2.3.1.3. South Africa and Cape Town in the 1960s**

In the history of South Africa it is notable that as the economy moved down an ever more capital - and skills-intensive growth path (Nattrass & Seekings, 2010), the apartheid government adapted its approach with regard to the links between education provision and work. As the need arose for more skilled labourers, the education system adjusted its focus and rationale, including how it gave different groups access to academic and vocational education provision (Badroodien, 2004). For example, in the 1930s through to the 1950s vocational education was only provided for the white population. However, from the 1960s, as the white population took up skilled positions and increasingly moved into the tertiary sector, there was a greater demand for members of the coloured and African populations to focus on and take up semi-skilled levels of vocational education.

Chisholm (1984:7) explains how this was due to "skilled labour shortages [that] arose in South Africa during the 1960s largely as a result of the trend towards a rising organic composition of capital through mechanisation, reorganisation and rationalization of the labour process to thereby enhance

capital's national and international competitiveness". This, she argued, was occasioned by even greater segregation – based labour policies that entailed that different jobs and occupations be meticulously graded and racialised. This required greater attention and thought than the previous approach where “the white population had to take up the skilled jobs, while African people took up manual work that did not require training, was less mentally challenging and cost little” (Chisholm, 1989).

Chisholm (1984:8) observes that the

shortages of technicians, supervisors and artisans in production were met by floating the colour bar; shortages of clerical, administrative and sales personnel in circulation were mitigated by the 'availability of large amounts of foreign investment capital'; and the need to reproduce skilled labour power at the higher end of industrial need led to the apartheid state either focusing on providing higher levels of provision at colleges and technikons (vocational and technical education for the white population) or by resolving this challenge through white European immigration.

The period 1963 to 1973 was thus underpinned by some economic improvement amongst the African population where for the first time the wage gap between the white and African populations narrowed for the first time (Worden, 2011:130).

#### **2.3.1.4. South Africa and Cape Town in the 1970s**

The economic boom of the 1960s was however very short lived. With the 1970s came a deep recession, changing economic conditions, and a significant reduction in foreign capital inflow into South Africa (Mariotti, 2009). The thriving manufacturing, mining and motor industries of the past became unprofitable, leading to many workers losing their jobs and periods of serious worker unrest, as well as a rapid increase in unemployment.

The situation shepherded in the introduction of new technology to increase productivity, but also forced the apartheid government to rethink its stance on skilled and semi-skilled labour (Chisholm, 1983). Subsequent reform of some aspects of the reproduction of labour power led to the removal of many race-based discriminatory barriers (such as job reservation in the Cape Province) in the labour market. The goal was to encourage a larger number of the African population to enter semi-skilled occupations and to facilitate the growth of an African petty bourgeoisie. It was argued that

the best way to solve the shortage of skilled labour lay in upgrading the qualifications of significant sections of the black population( Chisholm, 1983).

Notwithstanding, these moves resulted in greater worker and student unrest, followed by the township revolts in Soweto in 1976. That was because despite a growth in number of African learners attending school in the early 1970s, the difficulty in finding employment after school education increased during the recession. It further led to the founding of a number of student organisations (such as the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) in 1979) intent on achieving greater levels of social change and educational access in South Africa (Badat, 1999:277). State repression as a result of these developments was strong and continued into the 1980s (Worden, 2011:131).

#### **2.3.1.5. South Africa and Cape Town in the 1980s**

The 1980s in South Africa is notorious as being the period of most social upheaval at all levels of South African society. It is credited as being a key turning point in the history of South Africa that led to the breakdown of apartheid control, and eventually to the first democratic elections of 1994. It was also the period in which the high levels of social unrest and resistance were met with the most vicious reprisals, repression, and the use of brute force by the apartheid government.

In this period of increased internal pressure, the apartheid government further resorted to a political solution with the introduction of the Tri-cameral parliament. The idea was not to tamper with the balance of power but to offer the coloured and Indian populations levels of representation that would pacify them, and thereby protect urban areas from further unrest. Instead, the introduction of this system in 1985 led to renewed civil society protest illustrating that the majority of South Africans wanted more wholesale change (Worden, 2011:146-147).

Mass action campaigns from 1984 included strikes, mass protests and school, rent and consumer boycotts. These were aided significantly by the energy that came with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) which had been launched to dissuade Coloured and Indian voters from participating in the tri-cameral elections. The apartheid government responded by declaring a state of emergency as a way of severely restricting mass mobilisation and extra-parliamentary activities. From 1985, the state of emergency lasted for most of the decade (Worden, 2011:147-148).

Alongside these developments, the highly capitalised manufacturing industry had by the 1980s begun to dominate the economy, requiring large numbers of semi-skilled workers. Past policies were thus “no longer appropriate to the needs of South African capitalism” (Worden, 2011:135). A discourse of free market enterprise subsequently became a buzzword amongst state officials as they sought to develop a stronger alliance between the apartheid state and business. Job reservation for the white population was dismantled and a greater emphasis was placed on creating a more diverse permanent workforce (Worden, 2011:136). This was followed by public amenities like hotels, restaurants and theatres in large cities no longer being compulsorily segregated, with the focus being on ‘intensifying class differentials and reducing racial ones’ (Hyslop, 1988:190).

For the dissertation the purpose on focusing on political and economic changes during the three decades from 1960 to 1990 has been to highlight the kind of political environment that students attending school in that period had to engage with. It further identified the kinds of changes that were emerging within the labour market, especially in the 1980s, which were not available before. Students exiting school from the 1980s did not only have a firm sense of the prevalent educational inequality that framed their lives, but also had greater promise of further education, social mobility, and employment than before. The section below explores the role and provision of education under apartheid as a way of showing some of the educational developments that informed both student lives in the period 1960 to 1990, as well as the ways in which teachers went about their task of providing a solid base for their students.

### **2.3.1. Learning and teaching under apartheid: Changing prospects**

#### **2.3.1.1. Bantu Education**

The nature of education provision in South Africa in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is best characterised by the Bantu Education Act of 1953. It was this Act from 1953 that formalised inequality in South Africa and institutionally and pedagogically structured and reproduced racial separateness and remade public education in South Africa (Soudien, 2012:106). By making a firm effort to separate the church and state in the 1950s, the apartheid government sought to reduce the influence and support of other churches on African (and coloured) communities and take firmer control over its urban and peri-urban schools and centres (Fraser, Meier, Potter, Sekgobela Poore, 1996). Kallaway (1984) notes that part of the reason for this was to ensure that the African population remained ‘illiterate and incompetent’, connected to their own culture, and that this



reduced their potential for rebellion and conflict. On the other hand, greater state control also allowed the apartheid government to provide a greater degree of free, compulsory and state-paid benefits to the white population.

Indeed, it was the Bantu Education Act that set a path whereby the schooling system became deeply balkanised by race, with white schools at the top, followed by Indian and coloured schools, and held up at the bottom by an impoverished African 'schooling' system (Kallaway, 1984). The main logic, as espoused by HF Verwoerd Minister of Native Affairs, was that the African population "should be educated for their opportunities in life" and that there was no place for them "above the level of certain forms of labour" (Christie, 1985:93). Verwoerd furthermore noted;

I just want to remind the Honourable Members of Parliament that if the native in South Africa is being taught to expect that he will lead his adult life under the policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake. The native must not be subject to a school system which draws him away from his own community, and misleads him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze (Christie, 1985:93).

It was also the Bantu Education Act of 1953 that set the tone for racial separation and the development of specific kinds of student identities amongst members of the newly formalised racial groups (Hyslop, 1988; Kallaway, 2002; Soudien, 1998). Hartshorne (1992:41) notes that:

Bantu education served the interests of white supremacy. It denied black people access to the same educational opportunities and resources enjoyed by white South Africans. Bantu education denigrated black people's history, culture, and identity. It promoted myths and racial stereotypes in its curricula and textbooks. Some of these ideas found expression in the notion of the existence of a separate 'Bantu society' and 'Bantu economy' that were taught to African students in government-run schools. This so-called 'Bantu culture' was presented in crude and essentialised fashion. African people and communities were portrayed as traditional, rural, and unchanging. Bantu education treated blacks as perpetual children in need of parental supervision by whites, which greatly limited the student's vision of 'her place' in the broader South African society.

Kallaway, (1984) argues that apartheid schooling was designed and motivated to ensure that the white population was schooled to take on managerial positions in society and to be dominant in all

economic, political and social arenas of South African society. This entailed providing them with particular kinds of school facilities as well as a particular kind of school curriculum (Christie & Collins, 1984). For the African, coloured, and Indian population the curriculum deliberately limited the kinds of subjects and subject content they got access to.

Notwithstanding this limited access to and leeway in schooling choice, many coloured, Indian, and African schools continued however to produce students that challenged their various socialisations and inequalities (Kallaway, 1984). In much the same way as Shor (1987:14) observed for the USA that schools were capable of “reproducing alienated consciousness and become arenas of contention, in which critical educators can challenge inequality through a critical curriculum in a democratic learning process”, Wieder (2008) notes that many schools for African, coloured, and Indian students in South Africa from the 1950s continued to go about educating their students in ways that led to meaningful and productive transitions into adult life. As Soudien (2012:108) notes:

Popular responses to these developments were wide ranging in their variety. Political organisations and teacher unions in particular were vociferous in their rejection. Groups of people around the country rallied against what they decried variously as the ‘barbarism of education’, the ‘bantuising of education’, and so on. In the Western Cape and Eastern Cape the CATA, AAC, and NEUM refused to collaborate with their ‘oppressors’ and so gave only the minimal degree of cooperation to officials of the authorities such as inspectors. The schools that they led became sites of alternative education, succeeding in maintaining the ideal of non-racialism.

### **2.3.1.2. Learning under apartheid**

As noted above, schools that provided for the white population from the 1960s were funded significantly better than schools that serviced the coloured, Indian, and African population (Kallaway, 1984). And even though there were few schools provided for African students in urban areas, these were strictly monitored and controlled, with their overpoweringly prescriptive syllabi designed in full accord with the kinds of jobs available for each of the ‘racial’ groups (Kallaway, 1984).

The purpose was to control and to denigrate African and other histories, cultures and identities through the promotion and insertion of myths and racial stereotypes in curricula and textbooks. The African population was portrayed as an essentially traditional, rural and unchanging group that needed the ‘parental guidance’ of the white population, with provided curricula that greatly limited

student visions of ‘their place’ in the broader South African society (Hartshorne, 1992:41). This further negatively impacted on how these students imagined their futures and their possible success (Hyslop, 1988). In this scenario, schools were understood as direct instruments of social control, preparing African, coloured, and Indian students for subservient roles in society.

There was also little opportunity for upward mobility amongst these groups. Other than the University of Fort Hare - that was established in 1916 for historically *black* students and was the academic home of people like Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, and Mangosuthu Buthelezi - and the University of the Western Cape - that was established in 1960 for students of the coloured population - there were no institutions that provided reasonable access to further learning for African coloured, or Indian students. And where students could get access to universities like University of Cape Town, they invariably could not attend as they did not have the financial resources to sponsor themselves nor could access the kinds of financial aid required. Student imaginings of their learning futures were thus bound up in both their ideological (in how they viewed and could view themselves) and structural (in how they practically accessed schooling) realities.

For the dissertation, it is important to understand the schooling and social realities for most students attending school in the period 1960-1990. While they had a greater degree of agency from the late 1970s in being able to imagine a different career and future, for most students there were limited occupational positions that they could slot into. This made school performance an important hurdle to overcome if they sought a better future than predicted by apartheid logic (Kallaway, 1984).

### **2.3.1.3. Teaching under apartheid**

In relation to the above, African, coloured, and Indian teachers under apartheid were expected to be obedient civil servants that executed fully-defined instructional tasks as per the official syllabus and a ‘moderated’ examination (Nkomo, McKinney, & Chisholm, 2004). Teacher compliance was enforced through a variety of complex instruments, including a system of school-wide and individual teacher inspection, a rigid syllabus outlining official content, objectives and methods of teaching, and a hierarchy of internal (such as the principal) and external controls (such as routine visits by departmental officials). Teachers were expected to act fully in accordance with their instructions, with possibilities of flexibility or creativity greatly curtailed in their teaching. Rote learning and authoritarian approaches to teaching in African, coloured, and Indian schools was always promoted (Christie, 1986; Thembela, 1986).

Teachers were forced to follow examination criteria and procedures that left them with little latitude to determine standards or to interpret the work of their students (Hartshorne, 1992). This was controlled by a body of white inspectors (the first black inspector was only appointed in 1981) whose responsibility it was to ensure that teaching and learning conformed strictly with the content specifications of the apartheid syllabi (Gilmour, Soudien, & Donald, 1999). These inspectors (responsible for a group of schools in a demarcated circuit) had the further task of ensuring compliance with apartheid in all aspects of school functioning – from governance and administration to curriculum and assessment (Hartshorne, 1992).

When teachers did not fulfil the above functions or even criticised the government or school authorities, they were severely cautioned and chastised. Any teacher that was found to be anti-government was legally disciplined and first threatened with dismissal by the school board (Hartshorne, 1992:289), before other options were activated – such as arresting teachers, banning them, firing them, or redeploying them to remote areas where they could do limited ‘damage’ to the state (Hartshorne, 1992: 289, 341-343). These conditions were further exacerbated by the poor schooling conditions that many teachers in African, coloured, and Indian schools under apartheid were subjected to, the kinds of wages they were paid, the overcrowded nature of their classrooms, and the rigid teaching environment in which they ‘performed’ (Kallaway, 1984).

For the dissertation this background to teaching (as a profession) informs about the nature of schooling and schools in the period 1960-1990 and illustrates the kinds of challenges that teachers encountered daily in their work. Yet, many teachers in schools designated for the African, coloured, and Indian populations were undaunted. Needing to constantly find new ways to remain in their positions in order to serve the students, many teachers juxtaposed their opposition to the state (through their teaching) with pragmatic views on how best to assist their students. For many of them, it was often not a contradiction to focus on getting their students to succeed academically as a way of getting them into university or other prospective careers with the proviso that they ‘give back to their communities’ (Wieder, 2008; Kallaway, 1984; Chisholm, 1991).

#### **2.3.1.4. Challenging the status quo in Cape Town**

Chisholm (1991) notes that there were many schools under apartheid that encouraged critical thinking, and that used education as a weapon against the apartheid government. Their view was that schooling could provide an important makeover for many of their students’ identities and

circumstances, and serve to transform their social, economic and political worlds (Chisholm, 1991). Many of such schools developed learning models that promoted critical and creative thinking and problem-solving abilities, and put in place systems that encouraged students to be innovative, productive, skilled and informed citizens, equipped with a variety of life skills. Their focus was often to produce and alienate student consciousness in ways that allowed them as educators to challenge inequality through a critical curriculum in a democratic learning process (Shor, 1987:14).

To illustrate this, Chisholm (1991) points to a particular group of schools (for the coloured population) in 20<sup>th</sup> century Cape Town that became centres of critical thinking and opposition to government policy (Chisholm, 1994), implementing what Segall and Gaudelli (2007) refer to as social critical thinking. This entailed getting students to challenge taken-for-granted meanings and suppositions and to question how knowledge is constructed and used. For many students that attended these schools over the second half of the century, interrogating issues of power, justice and identity and the ways content and practices were shaped by different ideologies, were standard activities. Fiske and Ladd (2004:47) note that:

Although most black students received an authoritarian education designed to discourage critical thinking, there were some notable exceptions. One such school was XXX High School, which served coloured students in Cape Town and over the years became a centre of critical thinking and opposition to government policy. Teachers invited speakers to talk about world politics, encouraged students to read critical exposés about South Africa, and provided films and panels about colonialism, capitalism, and apartheid.

Many of the above school principals played key enabling roles in politicising students and encouraging them in the struggle against apartheid, while a large number of educators played active roles in providing them with quality education. They also focused on reminding students that if they were to effectively resist the state they needed to remain at school and complete their education. In an interview in 2003, one such teacher noted the following:

The government sought to destroy the intellectual life of non-whites, but we put ideas in students' heads. We formed literary and debating societies and reached out to other schools. We used the growing numbers of youth in the country to create social pressure to drive the government to release Mandela and to make concessions. It was a tremendous battle to do this while maintaining education (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:47).

Nasson (1990) similarly recollects (he was a student at one such school in the late 1960s) how in his history class he was told one day that:

Class, you may be bone-idle or your brains may be in deadhorse gulch when you're messing around in geography or biology. But for heaven's sake, this school has a mission to teach you history that can liberate you. We are here to make sure that the Herrenvolk poison contained in your textbook does not contaminate you. Even if you have only one miserable functioning brain cell, the real history you learn here will help to equip you to resist the perversions of our society. We as the oppressed cannot afford colonised minds. Our history, our liberation is inseparable because it teaches us that we should never salaam before this country's rulers (Nasson, 1990:189).

Notably, this focus on building a kind of Freirean (1968) self-consciousness was also tied to learning achievement, where educational attainment was deemed essential for future economic success. Teachers believed that students could assist in eliminating the social problems amongst the African, coloured, and Indian populations by being assimilated into the dominant middle-class world of Cape Town. Adhikari (1994:115) reflects that for many in the coloured population, education held the promise of a higher social status within their communities, as well as an escape from dreary manual labour. And for many teachers it was regarded as an obligation to provide such students with a “superior education through a combination of political control of education policy and breaking down economic and class related barriers” (Adhikhari, 1986:8).

For many teachers at the above noted schools these views and attitudes were initially fostered within the professional body of the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA), which admonished its teachers to think and act completely differently from other teachers (van der Ross, 1986). Teachers were encouraged to teach more than they were expected to, to be dedicated, and to always exercise care for the welfare and future of their students.

The TLSA stressed the “importance of education in correspondence with an understanding and a commitment to equality and democracy in South Africa” (Wieder, 2008:86). It further believed that “the job of teachers was to provide a normal and exemplary academic education while at the same time helping their students to critically analyse and challenge the colonialist, capitalist, and racist realities of South African apartheid” (Wieder, 2008:86). A student at one of the schools noted:

My school had a reputation as a political school, and one expected teachers to talk about political issues. Except they never gave political speeches but made people understand and realise that there were more important things out there than the purely academic (cited in Wieder, 2008:87).

In terms of a critical social analysis of schooling in Cape Town in the period 1960 to 1990, the TLSA played a critical role in shaping the identities of a variety of teachers across the city and for its dedication to professionalism and pedagogy within the profession. For the dissertation, the contribution of the TLSA provided an important variable that combined with social class, race, religion, history, and identity making to shape how a particular group of Cape Town students experienced schooling (through its brand of politics) in the period 1970-1990.

#### **2.3.1.5. The Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA)**

The Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) was founded on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1913 as an organisation for coloured teachers. The first president of the TLSA was Harold Cressy, a renowned educationist and principal of Trafalgar High School in Cape Town, after whom a nearby school was also named in 1953. The TLSA was established due to coloured teacher disgruntlement with their unequal treatment, poor working conditions, disparities in salaries, and lack of promotion opportunities (Adhikari, 1993:119).

The dictum of the TLSA, 'Let Us Live for Our Children' (championed in 1918), was part of an overall approach that regarded teaching not as a profession but a 'vocation' and a 'calling' (Wieder, 2003). To propagate this message, the TLSA published its own journal, the *Educational Journal*, in 1915. Providing input on educational and cultural news, issues, and opinions, the *Educational Journal* included philosophical discussions, debates, conference proceedings, grievance reports, inputs on curriculum, and the provision of model class lessons (Wieder, 2008:14). Notably, the initial focus of the TLSA was to alleviate problems amongst the coloured population (Lewis, 1987:180) and to assist the increasing number of people that was joining teaching to obviate the economic downturn in the late 1930s (Adhikari, 1993:54-55; Simons, 1976:213).

However, by the 1940s the organisation and its journal began to adopt a far more radical voice of black resistance. In 1945, with its unification to a wider grouping of organisations constituted as the Non-European Unity Movement (Lewis, 1987: 233), the TLSA transformed its professional and

political stance and embraced the movement's Ten Point Programme (TPP) of full democratic citizenship rights for all South Africans and the policy of non-collaboration. The TPP encompassed

the right to the franchise, education (which encompassed free and compulsory schooling for all), property and privacy, freedom of speech, movement and occupation, and social equality (of 'race', class and gender); revisions of land law, civil and criminal codes, taxation and labour legislation in keeping with the initial six points (Tabata, 1974:59-61).

Ironically, despite this more radical stance, the TLSA continued to regard "hard work, discipline, resistance to apartheid education edicts such as racial separation and differential curriculums", and preparing students for work in the capitalist world as all neatly tied together (Wieder, 2008:103). It is perhaps for this reason that many critics (for much of its existence) identified the TLSA with 'white' middle-class values - especially for its focus on respectability, veneration of civilisation, and pursuit of culture (Wieder, 2001:124). Its "overwhelming preference for English - the language of the urbanised coloured elite- and its penchant for social activities with connotations of social prestige such as welfare work, joining literacy, debating and musical societies and playing tennis", further contributed to this perception (Wieder, 2001:124).

Indeed, these values, along with the organisation's approach to non-collaboration - namely the "refusal by the oppressed to work the instruments of their own oppression in segregated and inferior political institutions" (Drew, 1996:16-17)- and its decidedly intellectual and scholarly tone led to it being mainly characterised as an "intellectual class operating in a colonial context" that saw themselves having "an essential community of interest with the rest of the oppressed and exploited" (Nasson, 1990:190).

Nonetheless, this perception of the TLSA enabled its members to become "more influential than those from other organisations because they could express themselves and they knew their subject better" (Nasson, 1990:194). It was asserted at the time that the TLSA's focus on getting teachers to adopt particular pedagogical approaches and practices in their bid to resist apartheid, were particularly welcomed.

Teachers in other spaces were particularly keen on the TLSA's location of South African history within an international and imperialist context, with the TLSA providing interesting interpretations, definitions, content, and pedagogies for others to use (Nasson, 1990:195). The idea of "taking the



nation to school” and “building the nation” through a process of “removing blinkers and prejudice” that artificially separated people and “teaching that all people belong to one human family and are of the same quality” (Hugo, 1978:416; Tabata, 1974), provided a welcome alternative to apartheid propaganda. Nasson (1990) further observes how high-school students were provided with interpretations of South African history that highlighted the problems of class domination and the exploitation of the oppressed, and how this provided moral markers against which present and future political actions could to be measured and judged.

#### **2.3.1.6. Teaching and pedagogy**

Indeed, what made teachers that embraced the TLSA ideology stand out lay in the ways they employed politicised pedagogies to develop the critical thinking of students. This wedding of politics and pedagogy created environments where academic excellence and political awareness went hand in hand. Chisholm (1991:9), quoting the *Scale Within Scales Journal*, observes that teachers were even regarded as “traitors to education and to the profession if they taught anything that blunted intelligence, stunted intellectual or spiritual growth, fostered provincialism or tribalism, bred intolerance of tyranny and acquiescence in social inequalities and ill-health”. The focus was always on how to enhance the academic setting while teaching students not to accept government segregationist educational policies.

In this regard, many schools also worked at improving their libraries and providing students with books and publications that were not on the Education Department’s approved list of materials. The students were exposed to wide readings from *The Torch*, *The Listener*, *The New Statesman*, *The Nation* and *The Educational Journal*. These readings exhibited a different writing style and tone, aimed at improving the criticality of the students. Furthermore, the schools invited other people to talk about occupational possibilities, providing college counselling and political teachings at times when it was not expected (Chisholm, 1991).

Moreover, TLSA teachers of a range of different subjects focused on collectively providing a common message at their different schools, and nurturing a love of knowledge both through the actual and the hidden curriculum. Nasson (1990:190) notes that the teachers were mostly:

Older men of towering personality and effective educational organisation who poured out vivid freewheeling rhetoric – Above all, as socialists, they had an intuitive grasp of the primary value of ‘history’ and their own historical function. Whatever their specialist teaching

subjects – history, literature, physics or biology – they constituted a collective forum which moulded a process of historically aware learning among pupils.

### **2.3.1.7. Making a difference through teaching**

Chisholm (1991) notes that teachers that followed the TLSA philosophy exposed students to classical literature, vigorous class discussions and rigorous debates that related to their modern liberal education, both within and outside South Africa at that time. This was done not only through formal schooling, but also through programmes like drama, debating societies, student representative councils, reading groups and sport. Molteno (1987:120) reflects how talks and guided discussions were the primary components of awareness programmes provided at certain schools, led mainly by students and some teachers. Outside people and past students were invited to talk on a wide range of topics.

Often, as an alternative to talks, awareness programmes at some schools would include quizzes in which a panel of students and teachers competed to answer. This kind of interaction with teachers compelled the students to think/reason, analyse and avoid taking things for granted (Chisholm, 1991). Teachers would also use films (based on significance and relevance) to bring awareness to students (Molteno, 1987:121). Thus, movies like *Nicholas and Alexandra* (based on the Russian Revolution), the story of Miss Jane Pitman (based on the life and times of an American slave and her eventual emancipation), *Viva Zapata* (about a hero of the Mexican Revolution), *Fire Power* (about an underground guerrilla movement battling US imperialism in an unidentified banana-type republic), and one on the conditions at an English private school and the responses of its students, were popularly showed all over the Peninsula. It was argued that such films increased the political awareness of students and helped them locate themselves in the global imaginary.

Chosen literatures with particular themes and tones also influenced the thinking and life perceptions of students. Teachers chose Shakespeare plays based on the assumption that they would add critical reading and perspectives that would incite thinking, analysis, assessment, and enhanced world outlooks (Wieder, 2003; Molteno, 1987:121).

Teachers also urged students to read widely. In some instances, they (teachers) photocopied material and circulated these amongst the students, especially if they were informative pamphlets relating to current affairs (Molteno, 1987). At many schools that followed the TLSA ethos, there would a ten-minute talk every morning on what had been printed in the previous evening's

newspaper. This was aimed at keeping students abreast of circumstances around them. It also offered them life skills that they could apply to these lives later on. Importantly, many students noted that because of these activities they were later able to transform their circumstances by using the skills acquired during their schooling. .

### **2.3.1.8. The power of politicised pedagogies**

For the dissertation politicised pedagogies (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007) are understood as that which enabled teachers to underscore the value of social critical thinking amongst students, as well as helping them to challenge taken-for-granted meanings and suppositions, and to question how knowledge is constructed and used. Politicised pedagogy is that which encourages students to interrogate issues of power, justice and identity, and the ways content and practices are shaped by different ideologies. The aim is for students to be able to make informed conclusions about certain content and practices that are advantaged and/or disadvantaged by the ideology of schooling, and to realise that certain views are always privileged while others are marginalised.

This approach to teaching entails teachers reading and questioning the prescribed curriculum and textbooks and scrutinising their relevance to, and validity in, the lives and futures of their students. As Freire (1970) notes, this kind of insight empowers students to move out of a culture of silence by learning to ‘better read’ the world in which they live. As such, students are taught to question and think critically – especially with regard to class disparities and racial stereotypes.

From the perspective of the TLSA, the goal of politicised pedagogies was not as much to change the social conditions of the world around students but rather to provide them with the critical faculties that allowed them to engage in the politics of the time and to ‘succeed in life’. As such, it was not regarded as a contradiction to go to university and become part of the better-off middle-class, if students so wished.

## **2.4. CONCLUSION**

In drawing on a fairly extensive literature to provide definitions, infer conceptualisations, and outline a background context, this chapter sought to illustrate how a variety of social, educational, and historical variables interact to create particular kinds of learning atmospheres. It also sought to show, using the literature, how factors like social class, race and religion can be understood, especially with regard to identity making amongst students, the development of particular attitudes and outlooks,

and how they may approach opportunities and future prospects in the future lives. The purpose of the chapter was to introduce elements and discussions that will be picked up in later chapters and to confirm that each of the issues are firmly located and addressed in both national and international literatures.

The following chapter engages with the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire and Nancy Fraser to show how historical, political, social, economic and schooling contexts that influence the learning, agency, transition and lives of students could be analysed and understood.

## **CHAPTER 3: USING THEORY**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reveals the main theoretical spine of the dissertation. Its purpose is to help explain in later chapters how and why variables or constructs like social class, race, learning, and context (as noted in chapter 2) interconnect to provide meaning for different individuals and communities. It grapples with theories on why people are connected in the way they are, and treats theory as the key narrative that explains why people may act, behave, or make decisions the way they do, as well as how this connects to existing knowledge. The goal is to use the theory to move beyond description of the focused case study to a form of generalisation that identifies the limits of what individuals say and the relevance to various educational issues and challenges linked to their life decisions.

More specifically, the chapter develops a theoretical lens for the dissertation that allows it to later connect with the stories and lives of past students, their learning, their engagement with their individual challenges, and what they say about themselves and their ‘accomplishments’ in the deeply unequal world of apartheid South Africa. In this regard, the chapter tries to show how the lives of human subjects (like those under apartheid) are not definitively defined by structures and contexts, but that they invariably ‘act back’ on the worlds they inhabit by employing a variety of understandings and meanings to navigate particular pathways into adulthood and work (Bourdieu, 1984).

For the dissertation, the chapter examines the key ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, Nancy Fraser, and Paulo Freire to analyse how people ‘act back’ on their worlds. It explores theoretical frameworks that can help explain how the home backgrounds of student subjects in the study, historical moments in their schooling experiences, the kinds of learning they are exposed to, and the kinds of people they interact with in their learning, intersect to shape their thinking, their decision making, and their planning as they go about living.

### **3.2. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS**

Social life is a puzzle. On the one hand people manage to live together in society quite well, they know there are rules and laws that they need to abide by, and they develop established

frameworks to socially interact. On the other hand, there are social problems and societal frameworks that cause much grief and suffering, with people often not knowing the right way to act for the benefit of everyone. It is indeed incredibly difficult to know why people and societies behave the way they do, or whether they understand the consequences and possibilities of their actions.

It is also puzzling how so many things in society persist over time, such as ways of living, ways in which people think about each other and act towards each other, language, writing, legal frameworks, religious traditions, families, arts and culture, histories and identities of particular communities, and how for most of these individuals, certain social contexts somehow seems completely objective and real.

How this happens is best explained in the literature as socialisation, namely the influence of society on the development of people, where people internalise particular knowledges and beliefs in building their personalities that enable them to become full members of society, (Bandura, 2001). Normally this happens via a variety of institutions that organise their lives and provide meaning to the ways they go about living. Importantly however, institutions don't arguably constrain individual action but "provide frameworks of language for people to communicate with each other and develop rules and laws that prevent them from being harmed by others" (Scott, 1995).

In this respect, education plays a crucial role in the socialisation of society. It is through education and schooling, according to Durkheim (1925) cited in Giddens (2006), that people learn their history, gain an understanding of common societal values, develop common religious and moral beliefs, learn self-discipline, and internalise social rules that unite them as a community and contribute to them functioning as a society. It is also through education that people learn the kinds of skills that they need to perform specialist occupations and roles in society (Durkheim, 1925 cited in Giddens, 2006:686).

For others like Talcott Parsons (1956) the main function of education is to instil the value of individual achievement into each student as a way of getting them to break from earlier socialisations and to learn what the universal standards are to exist in modern society (Giddens, 2006:687). Whatever the approach, the common idea is that education plays a key

role in both reproducing ways of thinking and living (invariably unjust and unequal) and providing students with the skills and knowledge to challenge this.

For the dissertation, the work of Pierre Bourdieu is particularly useful for understanding this role and function of education, as well as the political nature of schooling provision and its relation to society at large. Bourdieu's work offers key ways of understanding the kinds of 'capital' and 'accumulation' that individual bring to particular situations, and how this subsequently influences their navigations and decision making. His analysis is particularly helpful because it suggests ways to understand how these notions become entwined within the 'accumulated histories' of different individuals, and get mobilised to help them traverse particular personal paths.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is in this regard a crucial concept in the dissertation that helps explain how the organisational cultures of schools are linked to wider socio-economic cultures, and how through various processes, schools and their catchments not only mutually shape and reshape each other, but confer on individual students particular characteristics and powers (Reay, Davies, David & Ball, 2001). As such, it matters which schools students attend, the quality of learning they receive, the kinds of resources available to them, and the kinds of fellow students they interact with. These either promote or inhibit their learning and influence their engagements, perspectives of life, and subsequently who they set out to become. According to Bourdieu (1971:192), "it may be assumed that every individual owes to the type of schooling he has received a set of basic, deeply interiorised master patterns".

For the dissertation a key challenge was that Bourdieu's works doesn't adequately reveal those key moments in everyday life where there are 'concrete possibilities' to think and act differently within schools and social institutions. Bourdieu's works invariably fail to acknowledge that "teachers, students, and other human agents can come together within given historical and social contexts to resist those elements that reproduce the conditions of their existence" (Giroux, 1983:259).

As such, the dissertation also employs in Section C the work of Nancy Fraser whose theory of social justice offers ways of thinking about the school as a site of 'new possibilities' and advocacy that can transform the circumstances of disadvantaged students. She argues that schools can enable students to overcome 'those barriers' that inhibit them from participating

on par with others and as full partners in social interactions (Fraser, 2007:27). Fraser (2007) provides ways of understanding how inequalities and disadvantages in schools can be curbed when the concepts of redistribution, representation, and recognition are applied, especially when they promote student agency, and notions of self-worth, self-respect, and personal identity.

That said, given that the concept of learning is crucial to the dissertation, the chapter explores the work of Paulo Freire as a way of engaging with how teaching correlates with learning in schools, and the kinds of educational practices that “open the eyes and minds” of students to “become more fully human by reflecting and acting upon the world in ways that transform it” (Freire, 1978:26). It is argued that Freire’s focus on the kinds of thinking and ideas that connect what students learn in class to their everyday lives is particularly germane as it illustrates the importance of pedagogy to the lives of teachers and students. Freire (1978) points to the moral and political nature of pedagogical practices that produce the capacities and skills necessary for students to develop alternative pathways in their future lives. As such, Freire’s work serves as an important vehicle, sandwiched between Bourdieu and Fraser, to think about and link societal dilemmas and school structures to student agencies across different historical periods; especially under inhibiting environments like under apartheid where for many students (in the study) it must have felt that the structures around them were ‘everlasting’.

### **3.3. SECTION A: PIERRE BOURDIEU**

#### **3.3.1. Before getting into Bourdieu’s toolbox**

As noted above, there is little doubt that schools play an important function in the reproduction of social inequality and social exclusion in society, mirroring relations within dominant society. Schools are part of a larger universe of “symbolic institutions that do not overtly impose docility and oppression, but subtly reproduce existing power relations through the production and distribution of a dominant culture that tacitly confirms what it means to be educated” (Giroux, 1983:267). The question is why and how schools do this.

In terms of the ‘why’, according to Bourdieu (1974) schools reproduce existing power relations in order that ruling classes retain dominance and power in society. Their purpose is



to uphold core “values and beliefs and legitimise dominant forms of knowledge, ways of speaking, ways of relating to the world, and definitions of the social world that are consistent with the interests and retention of those in power” (Giroux, 1983:268). Moreover, schools perpetuate existing social patterns firstly to justify social inequalities, and then by giving students access to schooling and ‘gifting’ them their ‘natural right’, they perpetuate inequity by demanding from all students that they have what the education system does not provide them all (Bourdieu, 1974:32). The logic is that if everyone has an ‘equal opportunity’ to succeed, then failure is a consequence of ‘individual failing’ rather than the fault of a system structured to favour one social class over another (Giroux, 1981). With schools able to promote those students that enter equipped with cultural privileges, and progressively eliminate those whose ‘ways of doing’ differ significantly from that of the dominant group (Lakomski, 1984:152), schools help ensure that dominant relations of power persist.

Further, in terms of ‘how’ schools and education do this, Bourdieu suggests that schools mainly propagate the ideologies of the dominant by adopting their core values, norms, ideas, beliefs, language and aspirations within school systems and processes, and in this manner prompt social inequality by imbibing within school structures and systems particular allocations of status and power. Schools also do this through the design of pre-determined curricula that determine what gets taught, to whom, and how. They achieve their ‘prescribed goals’ through teaching subject content selected to uphold particular sets of interests, beliefs and values and by transferring certain dominant linguistic and cultural competences that all students alike are required to ‘absorb’ in order to succeed (Bourdieu, 1974).

Bourdieu refers to these “acts of cognition and misrecognition” that lie “beyond or beneath the controls of consciousness and will” of students as “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992:113). Symbolic violence is exerted when the dominant deny those that they dominate, the power and capitals to make independent choices; thereby implicitly and explicitly compelling them to adopt dominant lifestyles. Crucially, symbolic violence is also exerted when the dominated internalise the discourses of the dominant, perceiving the most intolerable conditions of existence as ‘acceptable and even natural’ and thus accepting their position at the bottom of the social order as normal (Lakomski, 1984).

Symbolic violence operates inside organisations by virtue of the fact that the dominated in those contexts perceive and respond to the organisational structures and processes that dominate them through modes of thought (indeed, also of feeling) that are themselves the product of domination: the ‘order of things’ comes to seem to them natural, self-evident, and legitimate (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:31).

Bourdieu (1990c:166-167) asserts that in this way, “through the order of things and through the logic of practice (a form of ‘false consciousness’), the symbolically dominated conspire and commit isolated treasons against themselves”. For Bourdieu, they do this in a variety of ways and practices that influence how they experience their different lives. One example is when they think that their different vernaculars are not only inappropriate, inferior and not suitable for the world of work, but that their ways of thinking and doing, and their languages and cultures, are unsuitable and unimportant as well (Bourdieu, 1990c).

At school, these interactions and internalisations are legitimised and operationalised through the pedagogic practices of schools and teachers and the characteristics and practices of individual teachers. Teachers choose who to support in schools and inevitably provide “descriptions of objective processes that continually exclude children from the least privileged social classes” (Bourdieu, 1974:32; Bredo & Feinberg, 1979). Teachers further partake in forms of symbolic violence in their pedagogical practices, through what they highlight as important in their subject content, and in the teaching material that they use to remind students that they are to blame for their own suffering (both in what the content says, and in students not being able to process the required knowledge) and that their weaknesses lie in their ‘personal dispositions’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Importantly, however, having sketched the above scenario, Bourdieu also cautions that the dominated don’t passively implement given instructions in assumed ways. Bourdieu offers two key insights to hold onto in this regard. Firstly, despite being dominated this does not mean that the poor and marginalised don’t develop competing bases of legitimacy. Secondly, even in watered-down form, the behaviour and beliefs reproduced in poor and marginalised students cannot be assumed to be those of the dominant classes, and dominant cultures shouldn’t be treated as the only possible ones (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2002). Rather, via their

human agency, the poor, marginalised, and dominated regularly struggle over the meanings and definitions that create the structures around them (Lakomski, 1984:157).

Paul Willis (1978) offers an example of this in his work with working-class boys in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and 1970s. He observes how ‘the lads’ refused to accept the dominant ideology and developed antagonistic strategies and ‘counter-school cultures’. Importantly, they did not do this in clear, conscious, or ideological ways but rather revealed their ‘resistance’ through the visual, stylistic and behavioural forms that they chose to live their lives. In these moments, Willis asserts, the ‘lads’ caught a glimpse of their real position at the bottom of the social structure, as well as their potential agency to construct a cultural realm different from the dominant one. They thus developed ‘impulses’ that sought to subvert and defy their given situations (Willis, 1978:119).

Indeed, it is through this kind of concept of practice, as illustrated above, that Bourdieu attempts to resolve the conflict between structure and agency. He argues that field and habitus are intimately linked (and reproduced) through ‘flows of practice’, which determine possibilities for action, and that, while many practices are predictable (having set limits), they do change over time as people engage with them in different ways (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006:67).

In specific situations, for example schools, teachers can either reproduce dominant ways of enacting the world, or play crucial roles in teaching students alternative accounts that explain their social positions in terms of class, race and gender. In so doing teachers provide students with powerful epistemic tools that not only help them understand the production of their own histories, but enable them to conceive of new and different ways of doing things (Lakomski, 1984:161).

### **3.3.2. A road map of Bourdieu’s key ideas in the dissertation**

For the dissertation Bourdieu’s theories of social reproduction, symbolic violence, structure and agency, practice, field, habitus, and capitals, are particularly useful in analysing how a given school under apartheid in the period 1968 to 1990 contributed to particular forms of learning that past students were able to utilise in their future lives.

Bourdieu's theory of habitus allows the actions and 'thinking' of the chosen cohort of study participants to become more visible. In this, Bourdieu's theory points to how the participants in this study developed "transposable dispositions" that functioned as the "generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices" in environments where school practices were normally geared towards orienting students to "expected ways of living" (Bourdieu, 1979:vii). Bourdieu's theory of habitus illustrates how the habitus of the participants were able to transcend "determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious, or the individual and society" (Bourdieu, 1990c:54-55), and provided the different "individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives without consciously obeying rules explicitly posed as such" (Bourdieu, 1990b:76). Habitus is thus like second nature, where predispositions to act in certain ways by virtue of their personal environments, lead to people classifying the positions they take according to the positions they are in.

However, habitus also provides the capacity to generate agency (Bourdieu, Accardo, Balazs, & Ferguson, 1999), and be transformative in the ways that the striving, resistance and actions of the different study participants often lead to their circumstances being altered, with new paths and opportunities being opened for some of them to improvise, see things differently, and think differently about their futures and different social spaces (Reay, 2004:437; Moore, 2008:108).

Bourdieu's field theory also helps understand schools as a field that have historically, politically, and socially defined contexts in which students, their friends, their families and communities are positioned to behave in different ways that respond to the logics of power that maintain the worlds that they inhabit (Thomson, 2008:70). As such, a field is an arena of struggle and a site of struggle for power and influence between the dominant and dominated, with each having unequal access to the objects and weapons of struggle (McLeod, 2005:17). Both the dominant and the dominated actively work to transform or preserve their position in the field (Jenkins, 2002), and how they do so depends on their different levels of 'capital' in each field.

In the latter regard, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:108-109) highlight how agents are not 'particles' that are "mechanically pushed and pulled about by external forces" but rather are

bearers of capitals that, depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient themselves actively, either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of this distribution". The concept of capital is thus decisive in helping to understand past students' "ways of thinking and dispositions to life" that provided them with the "expected behaviours, expected language competencies, the explicit and implicit values, knowledge, attitudes to and relationship with academic culture required for success in school" (Henry, Knight, Lingard, & Taylor, 1988:233). It reveals how "accumulated labour", when "appropriated on a private basis by agents or groups of agents", enables students with the "appropriate social energy" to convert them into "forms of reified or living labour" (Bourdieu, 1986:15).

Crucially, students do not enter fields (schools) with equal amounts, or identical configurations, of capital. Some have inherited wealth and cultural distinctions from their upbringing and family connections. Middle-class students for example may possess quantities of capital that make them better able to adapt to the demands of schooling than working-class students. On the other hand, marginalised or working-class students may also cause 'ruptures' and 'change' their schooling experiences by 'learning the rules of the game' and engaging with utilised pedagogical practices and acquired capitals in ways that allow them to transform their lives (Bourdieu, 1988:172).

In this, some schools often equip the students with other forms of capital that broaden the types of capitals valued in their classrooms, with teachers acting as agents of transformation rather than reproduction. Such schools, through their curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, enable students to metaphorically 'speak' by being attentive to the different student voices, and engaging with their histories and experiences in both affirmative and critical ways (Grenfell & James, 1998:21).

Indeed, it is through different practices that the crucial bridge between structure and agency in society is formed. It is practices that illustrate the necessary processes by which social patterns of behaviour not only reproduce but also transform 'structures of domination' (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006:66), and it is through practices that different structures (field) and forms of agency (habitus) are produced in society.

For the dissertation, the transformative potential of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capitals, and field are particularly precious, in that they provide invaluable ways by which to understand the possibilities for schools and teachers to act in ways that improve the educational outcomes of marginalised students. Bourdieu's theory also offers useful and important ways to analyse the role and power of education in the lives of students, "linking pedagogy to social change, connecting critical learning to the experiences and histories that students bring to classrooms, and engaging the spaces of schooling as sites of contestation, resistance and possibility" (Giroux, 2003:6).

The following sections outline and describe Bourdieu's theoretical concepts in more detailed ways.

### **3.3.3. Field**

For Bourdieu the concept of field denotes

a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation in the structure of the distribution of power (capital), whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:39).

Put more simply, a field is a complex structure that comprises of various segments that are positioned differently to perform different functions. This could be applied to a variety of institutions (schools, churches, workplaces) that have different people that occupy different positions and that carry out particular roles in their institutions. Importantly, where people are located in given fields is a result of the interaction between their individual predispositions and their places within that field, as well as the amount of capital they have accumulated in that field (Bourdieu, 1974). Notably, the amount of economic and cultural capital gathered beforehand invariably determines dominant or subordinate positions in the field. Bourdieu observes that "positions in fields can to some extent be shaped by the habitus that actors bring with them" (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1975, cited in Swartz, 1997:123).

It is a field of forces in which exchanges and struggles take place. As such, in a field, power relations between and within its structure operate relationally (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For example, all schools comprise of principals, vice-principals, subject head teachers, senior teachers, teachers, secretaries, prefects, students and support staff. All these various groups of people relate to each other in various ways and perform specific functions in the school. In their relations they do not possess the same power, which then structures their behaviour within the field. In this regard, there are positions in the field that command the whole structure – those who dominate in a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage. More so, positions in the field are determined by the amount of capital different individuals have (Bourdieu, 1974).

Elucidating field theory, Bourdieu employs the metaphor of ‘a game’, denoting a field with given boundaries within which combatants compete according to given sets of rules. Thus, with regard to school performance for example, students compete to achieve qualifications using their individual capitals with the school playing a refereeing role in controlling, regulating and distributing the various capitals on display. The school accomplishes this function by framing and legitimising the particular knowledge that is considered important for the reproduction and replication of a particular and dominant societal view, and often discriminates in favour of those who know how to play the game and win the prize, and excludes those who do not know or who do not follow ‘the rules of the game’ (Tranter, 1996).

For those in authority to exercise their power, “all fields also follow specific logics” with each field having particular rules (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Fundamentally, the rules regulate and systematise actions within each field. In schools there are rules that have to be followed, such as how the teachers conduct themselves, teach and mark students’ work, and perform their overall professional duties within the schools. On the other hand, students have their own rules to observe, such as punctuality, hard work, and abiding by the particular rules of those schools. Furthermore, the rules of the game in the field are often exercised with limiting influence on the possible actions of the agents (Wacquant, 1989).

Implicit in the above ‘game’ is that there are always those who do not agree with the rules of the game, meaning that the field is also “simultaneously a space of conflict and competition in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of effective capital in it”

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:7). Some individuals resist “the forces of the field with their specific inertia; that is their propensities which exist in embodied form as dispositions or in objectified form in goods and qualifications” (Bourdieu, 1984:110). Furthermore, tensions and contradictions arise when people encounter, resist power and domination, or are challenged by different contexts. When this happens many resist within one field but express complicity in another (Moncrieffe, 2006:37).

#### **3.3.4. Habitus**

Importantly, the field also influences the ‘dispositions’ that different students possess. Schools in this instance play an active role in shaping the particular ‘dispositions’ of students by structuring their learning experiences in key ways. Mainly, through the syllabus and pedagogical practices selected, they influence student thinking, perceptions and thus how they think about their lives. Indeed, schools expose students to certain learning conditions and opportunities that “generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to the school’s demands” (Bourdieu, 1990c:54), and generate durable attitudes to their worlds that often motivate them to think in different ways.

This development of particular perceptions and attitudes that embody student dispositions, with the school playing a key role in how they interact, the languages they use, and their aspirations and value judgements, adds to the habitus of all students (Bourdieu, 1984).

But what is habitus for Bourdieu? What constitutes habitus that makes it such an important component of social life and individual socialisation? Given the importance of the concept for the overall dissertation, what are the different dimensions of habitus as it applies to ‘past students’ in the study and their interaction with the social worlds of their school?.

Essentially, the concept of habitus depicts in stark ways how dominant relations in society are reproduced via internal dispositions and everyday practices (Holt, 2008:233). It is about when the material conditions of existence generate “innumerable experiences of possibilities and impossibilities, and probable and improbable outcomes that, in turn, shape unconscious senses of the possible, probable, and desirable”. The main result is that people learn their ‘rightful’ place in the social world, where they do their best, given their dispositions and resources. Yet, it is also through this concept (habitus) that they contest and struggle (Bourdieu, 1984:47).



In definitional terms, habitus is a set of dispositions that generate and structure human actions and behaviours, and “internalised mental, or cognitive, structures through which people deal with their social worlds” (Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal & Wright, 2009:11). Notably, these ‘structures’ have a number of interesting dimensions that offer multiple spaces for agency. These are outlined below.

#### **3.3.4.1. Habitus as product and producer**

Notably, habitus both produces and is produced by society, and is formed from people’s personal history in relation to the social, cultural and political structures in which they are caught up. Habitus is, in simple terms, what people can do “within the confines or the strictures of society and their personal histories”. As such, habitus is not something conscious or rigid, although members of similar social backgrounds frequently have similar “ways of looking at the world and of operating in it” (Bennett *et al.*, 2009:11). New experiences, objects, actions or accomplishments are thus often accepted as valuable or rejected as a waste of time, depending on how well these fit in with already existing thoughts and processes incorporated in the habitus (Bennett *et al.*, 2009:11).

#### **3.3.4.2. Habitus as historical**

Habitus also comprises of different people’s ways of thinking, acting, feeling, and being. It is what they carry within their history, how they bring this history into their present circumstances, and how they make choices to act in certain ways and not in others. Nash (1999:176) argues that “in its wide conception habitus unites the past and the present. While being the product of early experience, habitus is subject to the transformations brought about by subsequent experience”. Habitus “is thus not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period” (Navarro, 2006:16).

Furthermore, habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures over time, but created by a kind of interplay between the two: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures, and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these (Bourdieu, 1984:170). As such, “the structures of the habitus are not ‘set’ but evolve over time. They are durable and transposable but are not immutable” (Maton, 2008:6).

### **3.3.4.3. Habitus as embodied in the mental and the physical**

Crucially, habitus is firmly embodied and grounded in the personal, meaning it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions (dispositions) but is expressed in durable ways “of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking”, (Bourdieu, 1990a:7; Bourdieu, 1990b:70). For many, the social dimension of habitus is thus firmly tied to the biological dimension. Habitus is then the physical embodiment of deeply ingrained habits, skills and dispositions that individuals possess due to their life experiences, which are acted upon within particular contexts, leading to their nurtured dispositions becoming transposable and lasting (Parsons, Adler & Kaczala, 1982).

### **3.3.4.4. Habitus as transposable yet changeable**

However, the dispositions that make up the habitus do not operate in a rule-like fashion with required actions. Rather, each disposition has a ‘generative capacity’ and a transposable potential that leads to certain reactions. This may be realised in a range of different behaviours, depending upon the situation (Bourdieu, 1990b:13; Bourdieu, 1990c:55; Bourdieu, 2000:149). For example, in the school setting, students may behave differently with different teachers due to the teachers’ knowledge of the subject, pedagogical practices and general handling of students’ matters.

On the other hand, particular dispositions do lead to certain practices or regular behaviours, and to individuals behaving in specific ways in given situations. Thus, although individual practices are difficult to predict, particular cultural orientations, personal trajectories and different forms of social interaction do shape individual thinking and application (Calhoun, LiPuma & Postone, 1993:4).

### **3.3.4.5. Habitus as both personal and social**

Habitus is also often created and reproduced unconsciously, “without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, without any conscious concentration” (Bourdieu, 1984:170). As an individual process, habitus is embodied within both an individual and a collective shared-consciousness that is mapped onto particular spaces in different ways. In that respect, habitus comprises of a firm link between the personal and the social. Habitus brings together subjective personal experiences to objective social structures in how dispositions that underlie individual actions

contribute to how social structures take various forms – “the dialectic of the internalisation of externality and the externalisation of the internality” (Bourdieu, 1977:72).

In so doing, habitus conceptualises the relation between the object and the subjective, or ‘outer’ and ‘inner’, by describing how these social facts become internalised. Habitus thus operates beyond consciousness, the reflexive and the effectual and is strongly influenced by subconscious and embodied motivations (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus also links the social and the personal via experiences during the life course that may seem unique in their particular contents but are shared in terms of their structure with others of the same social class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, occupation, nationality, region, etc. (Bourdieu, 1984).

In the end though, it may be argued that habitus is decisively shaped by social rather than individual processes, leading to enduring patterns of living and thinking that are transferrable from one context to another, shifting in relation to specific contexts and over time.

#### **3.3.4.6. Habitus as a practice**

Habitus further produces practices

that are patterned on, or connected to, past conditions. Even if individuals think that a practice is geared towards a future outcome, it is predicated on what has happened in the past. Practice is not a mechanical reaction (Bourdieu, 1977:73).

Rather, the habitus

produces practices that tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977:78).

More so, practice is the outcome of a habitus that is engendered from social structures and is played out in a distinct way and is pertinent to each situation. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 135) note for example that when a young person’s habitus fits with the social structures in place in the field of education, then they are “as a fish in water - they do not feel the weight of the water and thus take the world about them for granted”.

### 3.3.4.7. Habitus as social class action

Lastly, habitus is generated by the social conditions of lived experience, including race, ethnicity, geographical location and gender, and helps account for the interplay between race and class in understanding individual actors' interpretations of their life chances (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999:158). Habitus also reflects particular social class expressions, not only of differences and status distinctions amongst people but also of the ranking of individuals and groups according to their levels of achievement and the future lives they lead (Parsons *et al.*, 1982).

That said, the "habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations; that implicit in the concept of habitus is the possibility of a social trajectory that enables conditions of living that are very different from the initial ones" (Reay, 2004:433). As such, habitus is built upon contradiction, upon tension, and even upon instability (Bourdieu, 1990b) that is not merely about the smooth incorporation of static social structures (Lingard & Christie, 2003:321), and often involves people "perpetually thinking about, challenging, or even reconfiguring the co-ordinates according to which they live".

For example, in schools where students are actively engaged and encouraged to think critically, learning may not only become more meaningful, durable and transferable, but also fashion values that such students attach to learning (or how they understand success and failure) that then influence their worldly outlooks and future lives. In this way, their habitus becomes a combination of their schooling experiences, individual histories, social class background, the social context in which they grew up, the aspirations they were exposed to, and the capitals that they possess or have developed.

### 3.3.4.8. Habitus as spaces for agency

Importantly, habitus serves as a crucial mediating link between social regularities and the experience of agency. Individuals invariably take up different habituses and reorganise them as they interact with the different environments of their everyday lives. In this regard, individuals contain within themselves both their past and present understandings of their place within social structures, as well as the dispositions that mark out their various social positions. Brought up in different contexts and circumstances individuals are able to adopt different habituses, deportment, preferences, and expectations (Bourdieu, 1990c:82).

What habitus produces thus is not automatically determined actions, but what can be called a “capacity for constant improvisation” (Calhoun *et al.*, 1993:4), and as such provides individuals with a “‘creative’, active, inventive capacity” (Bourdieu, 1990b:13).

In this, an individual habitus comprises of both a subconscious, internalised sense of accessibility to life opportunities, and processes of improvisation within the confines of particular social realities (Horvat, 2003). As such, the amount of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital individuals possess are crucial to how they change their life situations and their positions within the field (Bourdieu, 1986). The next sections look at the concept of capitals and how, according to Bourdieu, they influence the habitus in the various fields.

### **3.3.5. Capital**

Capital is a powerful currency that works in and across the relations of different fields (Bourdieu, 1986). It is “accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its ‘incorporated’ embodied form) that, when appropriated on a private basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour” (Bourdieu, 1986:15).

As such, capital is a form of power within any given field that classifies individuals in particular institutions; to the extent that those with capitals are privileged to hold onto their benefits, while those without capital are constrained and restricted. Furthermore, capital has characteristics that allow its expression not only in economics but in other domains as well. On the one hand, capital is accumulated through investment and transferred by inheritance, and thus produces profit to its owner according to what can be done with its most profitable operations (Putman, 2000). On the other hand, capital is also a resource or command that enables individuals to exercise and resist domination in various social relations.

According to Bourdieu (1986:16), there are four types of capitals: economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Notably, each of them has a close association to social class, with their different forms being convertible by specifically located agents under specific circumstances, and with different exchange rates, depending on the relations between the relevant social fields, and depending on the gatekeepers and dominant agents located within each field (Bourdieu, 1984).

### **3.3.5.1. Economic capital: it's what you have**

Economic capital refers to financial resources and assets. This is a capital that is instantly exchangeable for money and privilege and is easily evident and visible. It is the capital from which other capitals draw their purpose and opportunity. Indeed, it is the “the potential of cultural and social capital to be transformed into economic capital that provides a forward-moving logic to the different forms of capital” (Bourdieu, 1986:25). In such situations, for that to happen requires significant effort and power. Bourdieu (1986) explains why many parents for example believe that investments of time and effort in education will result in the necessary increase in cultural capital and knowledge that ultimately would give their children (students) economic power.

Access to economic capital is important because it connects individuals to privileges and power, as well as influences the types of opportunities that they can access. Economic capital is also a resource for social mobility, with which not everyone has an equal relationship. Although financial affluence is an absolute necessity for social mobility, it is mainly derived from a combination of capitals and access to power positions within society. Both issues result in an asymmetrical positioning of individuals to the world around them (Skeggs, 2004:49).

### **3.3.5.2. Social capital: It's not what you know, but 'who you know'**

Social capital determines the communication and connections between individuals. These connections lead to the sharing of information that is crucial to the progress of the individuals as well as the identities, priorities, and efforts they exert. For Bourdieu social capital is the sum of the resources (actual or virtual) that “accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119). Social capital is thus

the product of investment strategies, individual and collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing the social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, and creates the conditions whereby such a relationship can become durable, sustainable and institutionally guaranteed (Bourdieu, 1986:22).

Social capital, in other words, is the investment of those in the dominant class to maintain and reproduce solidarity amongst their group and preserve their dominant position. In this, social capital is what creates the flow of information that contains specific norms that establish a predictable and trustworthy context for their organised activity (Lin, 1999).

Importantly, social capital also provides ‘frameworks of social relationships’ that come with certain obligations and expectations. For one, social capital is regarded as an important resource in social struggles carried out in different social arenas or fields (Siisiäinen, 2000). Secondly, social capital is grounded in networks of communication and shared values that provide collective support for individuals in particular communities. In this, communities commit themselves to using their resources and competencies to assist chosen individuals. Lastly, given inevitable conflict and power in society, individuals develop social relations and invest in social capital expecting that this will increase their overall interests (Siisiäinen, 2000). Social capital, according to Bourdieu, thus contributed in significant ways to the reproduction of the elite and their networks of influence.

This concept provided a significant challenge to those that agreed with Bourdieu’s view but felt it undermined the levels of agency that individuals could exert. As such, Coleman (1990) sought to define social capital as more of a “by-product inhered in the structure of relations between persons and among persons” and argued that it served as a unique resource whose function was to both serve as a social structure as well as facilitate the actions of individuals – whether persons or corporate actors – within that structure (Coleman, 1988:98).

Coleman asserts that social capital achieves this through the kinds of social relationships that are developed that provide value to individuals by producing critical networks that allow them to develop and progress (Coleman, 1990:32). In doing so, Coleman (1988:95) broadens Bourdieu’s concept by arguing that social capital is not only stock held by powerful elites, but can also have value for all kinds of communities, including the powerless and marginalised.

Coleman (1988:95) suggests that social capital provides individuals with “internal springs of action”, that provide individual drive and purpose. Thus, even when individual actions are shaped, redirected, constrained by the social context, certain norms, interpersonal trust, social networks, and social organisation are still possible (Coleman, 1988:96). This is done through a variety of other resources that individuals may employ, including their own skills

and expertise (human capital), tools (physical capital), or money (economic capital). For Coleman (1988) social capital is a source of useful everyday-information, and creates the norms and sanctions that facilitate certain kinds of action (Coleman, 1988:104-105), especially in future generations. One of these 'effects', Coleman argues, "is the creation of human capital within the next generation", through developing more secure self-identities, confidence in expressing opinions, and higher levels of emotional intelligence amongst them (Coleman, 1988:109).

The key difference between Bourdieu and Coleman's approaches thus is that Coleman regards social capital as a positive form of social control that connects cultural and economic capital of all individuals (Lareau, 2001). He regards links to business associates, work acquaintances, friends from outside everyday social circles, sports and other social groups, and friends of friends as all useful connections, especially when it was with people that had differing levels of power or social status, such as between the political elite and the general public, or between individuals from different social classes.

Notably, for both Coleman and Bourdieu, having social capital brings better privileges, opportunities, resources and networks that position individuals to engage and navigate their future lives quite differently (Holland, Reynolds & Weller, 2007:99; Lareau, 1987:73).

### **3.3.5.3. Cultural capital: status and access**

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that it is through cultural capital that social reproduction occurs. They argue that it is through cultural capital that the effect of socio-economic background is decoded within school performance, thereby ensuring intergenerational class advantage. When social position is shown to lie within dispositions to succeed at school, students from privileged families believe that their privileges and opportunities are natural and given. Cultural capital is thus the main vehicle that is used to maintain and legitimise the social process: "the higher the social class of the family, the closer the culture it cultivates and transmits to the dominant culture, and the greater the attendant academic reward" (Katsillis & Robinson, 1990:270). Bourdieu (1986) argues that it is the familiarity with different cultural forms (art and music) that the elite use to their advantage and don't allow to be made freely available to all. It is their (the dominant class) preferences, attitudes and behaviours that are emphasised, valued and constantly remastered (DiMaggio, 1982:190).



Cultural capital is “the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition and skills that are passed from one generation to the next” (Bourdieu, 1977:12). It is the “embodied dispositions (within students) towards cultural goods and practices as well as the formal qualifications that work as a currency and access to a variety of cultural goods” (Lingard & Christie, 2003:24). Cultural capital refers to resources such as high-status knowledge about art or music that serves as access to power for different individuals. It can also be understood as the social mannerisms that have a high status value within dominant societies (Horvat, 2003), and includes ‘tastes and habits’ that individuals acquire as they grow up within different families and social settings. Cultural capital is also what people acquire via discussions between themselves, parents and members of the community on cultural, political and social matters, as well as from the books they read (Marjoribanks, 2002).

Bourdieu (1990d) conceives of cultural capital as existing in three main forms, namely embodied (dispositions of the mind and body, sets of meaning, and modes of thinking), objectified (access to cultural goods such as art, literature, newspapers, instruments), and institutional (educational or academic qualifications), and that these are given legitimacy in schools by those that are already dominant therein (Bourdieu, 1997). Each of the three types of cultural capital is differently linked to the issue of schooling. Embodied cultural capital hinges on the dispositions that students have towards their educational lives and their futures. It entails the kinds of meaning that students make in given circumstances that shape the attitudes, preferences, perceptions and values that they attach to their work and other school activities.

Soudien (2004) notes that schools that serve communities with mostly middle-class backgrounds invariably ‘feed off’ the economic power of their students’ parents and stand a greater chance of higher levels of educational achievement, given their ability to develop well-resourced environments that are conducive to learning. In the end, within schools, the qualifications of teachers, their confidence in class, their experience in teaching particular subject knowledge, the availability of teaching materials, and the resources they employ, how and what they teach, significantly influences the ways in which students learn.

Also, students from affluent family homes are often more likely to be exposed to tastes, habits and mannerisms that stir up intellectual growth, and thus later yield good educational

credentials. Bourdieu (cited in Lareau, 1987:74) notes that “the cultural experiences and dispositions in the home influence the ways in which students adjust to school and how they transform cultural resources into cultural capital”.

Objectified cultural capital refers to the exposure that students are given to items like books and computers that provide them with access to technology and knowledge and also broaden their cognitive skills. Objectified cultural capital is thus closely connected to the social class background of students, in that middle-class students are more likely to benefit because their parents can easily afford to buy such items. This availability of objectified capital increases the opportunities for such students to proceed to higher institutions of learning and better opportunities for jobs and future lives. Objectified capital positions students in relation to access to class privileges, such as being able to go on trips over weekends to museums, archives, cultural shows and book launches, and provides them with a broader perspective on life; this influences their learning experiences.

Institutional cultural capital inevitably confers particular characteristics and powers on individual students through both the credentials obtained as well as where it is obtained. Where students attend school, the quality of learning that they get access to, the kinds of resources available, and the social factors within schools, then further inhibit or facilitate learning. This is particularly so for schools that are renowned for their students’ academic excellence and that head-hunt the best-qualified teachers to uphold this reputation.

#### **3.3.5.4. Symbolic capital: when capital becomes powerful**

As shown above, for Bourdieu students are propelled forward in their schooling by the kinds of privileges and ‘capital’ that each of them has access to. The reproduction of educational inequalities is thus a key product of the uneven allotment and deployment of forms of capitals between disparate social groups, as well as uneven encounters between the habitus of working-class and middle-class communities (Archer & Francis, 2006:31). Essentially, educational inequalities are produced and maintained when more powerful groups are able to secure access to sought-after resources.

For example, “middle-class families may draw on greater amounts of economic, social and cultural capital, and thus be enabled to maximise their options and choices and secure the most desirable and privileged educational pathways for their families” (Archer & Francis,

2006:31). Such middle-class families would also have access to higher levels of educational and social mobility, as their contact with the kinds of resources that lead to success are higher. Bourdieu (1987) suggests that students become well aware of the connection between social positions and possible lifestyles and thus begin to anticipate probable and realistic educational and occupational outcomes for themselves (Marjoribanks, 2002:8). Capital is thus symbolic of their power within any given field.

Symbolic capital operates when the situation of students seems to be the “natural order of things” (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002:25). In such situations students’ views of what they can achieve remain significantly different for dominant and subordinate groups in society. As a form of capital, symbolic capital is apparent when it is recognised as legitimate and powerful in a relationship of knowledge within a particular field (Lingard & Christie, 2003:324).

### **3.3.6. Maintaining or breaking the status quo**

This is especially so, according to Bourdieu (1987), in how dominant classes wield their symbolic power to impose definitions of the social world that are consistent with their interests. In particular it is particularly visible in how curricula are designed and how it is determined what is to be taught, to whom, and how, along with which subject contents are stipulated.

This may be further reinforced by the language policies that schools adopt, or the types of streaming they decide on when differentiating students. In terms of language, students that don’t speak a language of instruction at home are for example invariably disadvantaged, with the cultural capital of the dominant class rewarding students who possess such a capital and penalising those that don’t (Tzanakis, 2011). In terms of streaming, certain students are also often assigned to do subjects that the school considers challenging and who they believe are in a position to be competitive in the labour market. In contrast, other students are assigned to classes where they do subjects that schools classify as simpler and not requiring complex skills, in which case they are positioned to take up lower positions in the social hierarchy (Tzanakis, 2011:76-77).

Indeed, a key example for these kinds of processes can be found in South Africa under apartheid, through the views of Minister of Native Affairs, HR Verwoerd, in the 1950s. He noted at that time that:

When I have control of native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them. There is no place for him in European society above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice (cited in Collins 1998:406)

Thereafter, students from 'different races' were prepared for different roles in their lives according to both their 'inferior characteristics' as well as their supposed inability to grasp complex concepts. Race connected with social class in this way to lead to certain students being given access to higher education and others positioned to take up vocational occupations and enter the labour market as mainly labourers. Bourdieu (1987) refers to differentiation as playing a key role in making students different in ways that are recognised as valid by the dominant culture.

Giroux (1981) highlights how elimination is 'practically' achieved in two main ways: Firstly, through an examination system designed to progressively fail or exclude pupils. In such cases certain pupils fail more often in examinations because their cultural capital is seen to be less. Secondly, through self-elimination – these same children quickly come to understand that they do not speak the same language as the educational system, and they hence 'vote with their feet' by leaving as early as possible (or not entering) the educational system. Such children learn that their chances of educational success (as measured in terms of qualifications) are small and they 'realistically' assess future possible avenues open to them (which normally means work rather than general or further education).

### **3.3.7. Bourdieusian limitations for the study**

Notably however, schools and societies are not solely determined by the logic of the workplace or the dominant society. They constitute more than mere economically-driven institutions, and are crucial political, cultural and ideological sites where individuals engage and struggle (Giroux, 1981). In many ways, it is within these sites (schools) where there actually lie the most possibilities for social change.

Giroux (1981:3) thus cautions that the idea of "domination in society being constantly reproduced, especially in schools" must not be overstated since it fails to recognise how

teachers, students and the other human agents come together within specific historical and social contexts in order to both make and reproduce the conditions of their existence – students are not merely the by-products of capital, compliantly submitting to the dictates of authoritarian teachers and schools (Giroux, 1983:259).

Indeed, schools are characterised by diverse forms of school knowledge, ideologies, organisational styles and classroom social relations that often allow for significant struggle and contestation (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1986).

Furthermore, it is dangerous to treat culture as a one-way process of domination or as a strict form of class, as Bourdieu tends to do, since it fails to acknowledge the value of conflict in society, nor does it concede that cultural domination and resistance are inevitably mediated through the complex interface of race, gender and social class (Giroux, 1983:272).

Human beings create, resist and accommodate themselves to dominant ideologies, and do not simply usurp the cultural capital of particular families, neighbourhoods, or social classes. They do so through quite complex relations that develop between institutions and families that are “paradoxically framed by the variety of conflicts and struggles that underpin those relations” (Giroux, 1997).

For the dissertation, it is the works of Paulo Freire that offer an important conduit to connect the above kinds of struggles to the different capacities and skills necessary to develop alternative pathways in life. Freire reminds that all people are “subjects of their own lives ... narratives, rather than objects, in the stories of others”, and that as human beings they “produce and transform reality together” (Freire, 1970:29). He further argues that conscientisation and praxis (the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practising ideas) are crucial when reformulating the material, economic, and spiritual conditions of social life.

People need to emerge from their unconscious engagements with the world, reflect on them, and work to change them. In constantly transforming their engagements in and with the world, people simultaneously shape the conditions of their lives and constantly re-create themselves (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006:121).

Freire asserts that all people, particularly students, are beings that are constantly in the 'process of becoming' and that as unfinished, incompleting beings with an unfinished reality, they are inevitably in search of different forms of 'humanisation' (Freire, 1970:84).

To surmount the situation of the oppressed, people must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one that makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity. But at least the struggle to be more fully human has already begun in the authentic struggle to transform the situation (Freire, 1970:29).

It is then through emancipatory educational practices, Freire (1970:44-51) observes, that the drive to "become more fully human" is liberated, and through engaging "reflection and action upon the world" that the world is transformed. Indeed, emancipatory educational practices, according to Freire (1973:38), are particularly necessary when the social and cultural worlds around people do not provide them with the habits of political and social solidarity that are normally attendant with democracy. These practices are only required to democratise the oppressive elements of particular dominant societies, but also to harness "education as a form of cultural action" in order to develop "new attitudes and habits of participation and intervention".

For Freire, education is inevitably a political act, and thus educators constantly have to make political choices about either domesticating or liberating students when they teach, especially with regard to the insights that they share about the inherent political nature of education and its impact on their lives and the broader social world. Through their teaching, teachers develop (or don't) dialogic relationships with students where both learn, question, reflect and participate in forms of meaning making and develop forms of critical consciousness, and that allow them (or not) to question and explore the character of their society with a view to reconfiguring their places within it.

Echoing this, Edward Said (2001:501) notes that it is through pedagogy that conditions are provided:

For students to understand different modes of intelligibility, but also open up new avenues to make better moral judgments that enable them to assume some sense of responsibility to the other in light of those judgments. Pedagogy in this instance

provides the conditions to cultivate in students a healthy skepticism about power, and willingness to temper any reverence for authority with a sense of the critical.

### **3.4. SECTION B: PAULO FREIRE**

#### **3.4.1. Critical pedagogy**

Paulo Freire's concept of critical pedagogy underscores how pedagogical practices influence learning in ways that can either raise consciousness by giving people voice, or damage their creativity by treating them as objects of the world to be fed with knowledge (Freire, 1970:76-90). In that respect, Kincheloe, (2004:78) identifies five fundamental characteristics tied to critical pedagogy, namely (1) the development of a social justice framework, (2) the belief that education is inherently political, (3) a connection between the classroom and the world, (4) alleviation of human oppression and (5) the development of social action.

Firstly, with regard to promoting social justice, critical pedagogy is focused on encouraging people, through teaching, to disregard delimiting boundaries such as race, class, gender, religion, ability, language and geographical locations and to develop dispositions that seek to eradicate all forms of oppression and differential treatment in the practices and policies of institutions (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Murrell, 2006:18;). In learning via a social justice perspective, critical pedagogy becomes "both a process and a goal" with the ultimate aim being "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs" (Bell, 1997:3). It also enables teachers to contribute to justice-oriented students who view social, political, and economic problems systemically and engage in meaningful and useful ways in developing collective strategies for change (Hackman, 2005:103).

Secondly, by educating people about the inherent political nature of education, critical pedagogy is able to impact on their lives and the broader social world in ways that "connect knowledge and social responsibility to the imperatives of a substantive democracy, and that treats education as fundamentally tied to forms of political agency" (Giroux, 2001:10).

Thirdly, as Freire (1970) notes, connecting students in the classroom to their social worlds gives them power to critically engage with how they exist in the world with which, and in which, they find themselves, and how they come to realise that the world is not a static reality but 'a reality in process' and in 'transformation'. Self-consciousness is raised when people are

able to think critically and "recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded" (Purmensky, 2009:108). In this way, the personal experiences of students become an invaluable resource – something that gives students the opportunity to relate their own narratives, social relations and histories to what is taught (Freire, 1970).

Fourthly, the main goal of critical pedagogy is fundamentally to guide students, teachers, and citizens to understand who and what is responsible for oppression in schools and society and what steps are necessary for dismantling oppressive systems. It is to develop the conviction in the marginalised and oppressed that change is possible and to empower them to "perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (Freire, 1993:31; Porfilio & Ford, 2015: xvii). The purpose is not to merely liberate the oppressed but also to avoid the establishment of new forms of dependency and subordination. As such, critical pedagogy provides the tools (how to bring about emancipatory change, how to cultivate the intellect) for individuals to be able to recognise their oppression through reading items that develop their critical consciousness and ability, that stimulate them to become active inquirers and transformers of the world around them, and that urges teachers and social activists to reject forms of schooling that marginalise.

Lastly, critical pedagogy empowers individuals to see themselves as social actors (who have the power for social action) in the world rather than being constantly acted upon by history and society. In this regard, Kincheloe (2004:8) asks:

Do we want socially regulated workers with the proper attitudes for their respective rungs on the workplace ladder? Or do we want empowered, learned, highly skilled democratic citizens who have the confidence and the savvy to improve their own lives and make their communities more vibrant places in which to live, work, and play? If we are unable to articulate this transformative, just, and egalitarian critical pedagogical vision, then the job of schooling will continue to involve taming, controlling, and/or rescuing the least empowered of our students.

Critical pedagogy is thus about creating the forms of dialogue in the classroom and in society where respect is instilled and the humanity of the oppressed is restored (Freire, 1998; Nagda,



Gurin & Lopez, 2003). As such, for Freire (1970), critical pedagogy is fundamentally grounded in larger philosophical and social projects that are always concerned with how people may more effectively 'narrate' their various lives:

The starting point for organising the program content of educational or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people. Utilising certain basic contradictions, we must pose the existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem that challenges them and requires a response- not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action ... The task of the dialogical teacher in an interdisciplinary team working on the thematic universe revealed by their investigation is to 're-present' that universe to the people from whom she or he first received it- and 're-present' it not as a lecture, but as a problem (cited in Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006:122).

Genuine learning, for Freire, is achieved through the active engagement with the lived experience, through critical reflection and praxis (Aronowitz, 2003), where teachers and students become equal co-investigators and co-creators of knowledge and the world, and where education is a collective activity - a dialogue - between them. In this regard, Mayo (1999) argues that through dialogue, people's imagination, criticality, and perceptions and perspectives of the world change. More so, dialogue positively creates conditions that promote assertiveness, determination, particular notions of critical agency, and desires, to participate actively in the learning project. Aronowitz (2009:ix) notes that,

For Freire, literacy was not a means to just prepare people for the world of subordinated labor or 'careers', but a preparation for a self-managed life. And self-management could only occur when people fulfilled three goals of education: self-reflection, that is, realizing the famous poetic phrase, 'know thyself' - which is an understanding of the world in which they live, in its economic, political and, equally important, its psychological dimensions. Secondly, 'critical' pedagogy helps people become aware of the forces that have hitherto ruled their lives and especially shaped their consciousness. The third goal is to help set the conditions for producing a new life, a new set of arrangements where power has been, at least in tendency,

transferred to those who literally make the social world by transforming nature and themselves.

Moreover, critical pedagogy for Freire is crucial as it encourages critical thinking not just about how the past is reproduced and the present can be understood, but about how to think beyond the present - “soaring beyond the immediate confines of everyday experiences and entering into a critical dialogue with history in ways that imagine a future that does not merely reproduce the present” (Kress & Lake, 2013: xii). Critical pedagogy is about how power works through the production, distribution and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts, and how people are constituted as informed subjects and social agents therein (Giroux, 2010:217). It involves both the recognition that human life is conditioned and not determined, and that it is necessary (for an informed citizenry) to not only read the world critically but also always to intervene in the organisation of the larger social order.

Crucially, critical pedagogy is also about the opening of spaces where people come to terms with their own power as critically engaged citizens, where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is inserted as part of the purpose of education, if not democracy itself (Said, 2001:141). In this, it is key pedagogical activities such as debates, discussions, group interaction, peer teaching, sporting activities, and social welfare (civic) clubs that not only enhance learning, but enable people to participate actively and take responsibility for their learning, deepen understandings of texts, analysis, and perspectives of the world, and genuflect on their overall education.

Freire (1978) observes however that prevailing ‘banking models’ of education need to be urgently abolished and dismissed, given the ways it demobilises different people within existing establishments of power through conditioning that makes them accept the cultural, social, and political status quo of the dominant culture and also imposes powerful and pervasive constraints on what they are able to learn.

For Freire, the ‘banking education model’ is complicit in treating people as marginal, ignorant and resourceless, and passive objects to be acted upon. In this, prescribed curricula, syllabi or course books are particularly guilty of not taking into account or highlighting different people’s views or knowledge of the world, thus thwarting consciousness-raising and often accentuating the transmission of rote memorisation methods (even in the contemporary

period where group work is supposedly adored). In the latter, the uncritical adherence and heavy dependence on state-sanctioned and ideologically loaded textbooks is inevitably advanced as 'good learning' (Hartshorne, 1992).

### **3.4.2. Merely in this world: the banking model of education**

In dismissing the 'banking model' of education, Freire notes that one-way relationships between teachers and students mean that students invariably are always at the receiving end of learning, and are approached as empty vessels into which knowledge is merely deposited (like deposits in a bank):

This relationship [teacher-student] involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students), contents that are meant to be lifeless and petrified, and students that are dull and lacking abilities .... His [the teacher's] task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality and disconnected from the totality that engendered them and that could give them significance (Giroux, 2003:11).

The 'banking method' creates citizens that passively accept and adapt to the world as it is - based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness that transforms people into receiving objects, controls their thinking and actions, and inhibits their creative power (Freire, 1970:77).

In the 'banking model' teachers deliver 'packages of knowledge' where they supposedly 'know everything'- given that they know the content of the state-sanctioned curriculum. Teachers prepare lessons and exert absolute authority in schools, with students presumed to be ignorant and excluded from any participation in the pursuit of knowledge. Students are never encouraged to find out anything for themselves and are considered good students if they repeat the narrative about the world that they have been given.

The 'banking method' converts students into mere objects, eliciting either rebellious defiance by students or apathy, excessive obedience, uncritical conformity, lack of resistance against authoritarian discourse, self-abnegation, and fear of freedom (Freire, 1998). It creates a lack of student participation in the construction of knowledge that promotes alienated

consciousness, indoctrination of the students and compliance with the existing state of affairs, as well as adapting to the world of oppression (Giroux, 2003:10).

For the dissertation, this is particularly noteworthy given that during apartheid South Africa, the 'banking method' and rote learning methods were freely utilised to foster passivity and obedience, and to discourage critical engagement in class (Kallaway, 1986). Freire (1970) refers to such scenarios as the creation of 'limit situations' beyond which people cannot imagine themselves; where their senses of oppression are naturalised to the extent that their oppression has a certain kind of obviousness and immutability (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006:120).

### **3.4.3. Transforming oppressive structures**

As such, Freire (2014) sought, in conceptualising critical pedagogy as a 'pedagogy of hope' that gets people to imagine a different world from that of oppression and enables them to develop their own language that sketches out the conjectures, the designs, and the anticipations of a new world, to engage with how schools grappled with issues of ethical responsibility, critical analysis, and how to enact the democratic ideals of equality, freedom and justice (Keddie, 2012). He sought to show how people's consciousness, agency, hope, vocabulary and imagination of alternative spaces could be stimulated in ways where their voices are heard and their dreams realised.

In this he proposed the generation of a dialogic discourse between teachers and students that highlights connections between conception and practice, and between what goes on in classrooms and their everyday lives (Giroux, 2001:11). By approaching pedagogy as a moral and political practice crucial to the production of capacities and skills necessary for students to both shape and participate in public life, Freire suggested that knowledge always be subjected to critical scrutiny and engagement and tied to forms of social relevance. In this way, learning would not be about processing received knowledge, but about transforming it as part of a more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice (McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007); where the oppressed critically view the world and refuse being consenting objects to the status quo (Giroux, 2001; Addison & Burgess, 2003).

In this respect, Giroux (2001:10) argues that

schools should provide students with possibilities for linking knowledge and social responsibility to the imperatives of a substantive democracy. Education is not training, and learning at its best is connected with the imperatives of social responsibility and political agency. Furthermore, radical pedagogy opposes any prophetic pedagogic that knows everything before it happens, which teaches children that every day is the same and that there are no surprises, and teaches adults that all they have to do is to repeat that which they were not able to learn.

Here, Freire (1970) argues that it is when knowledge, values, desire and social relations are shown to be implicated in relations of power, that people deepen and expand understandings of the imperatives of economic and political democracy (Giroux, 2010).

In relation to the South African situation, Chisholm (1991), Molteno (1987) and Wieder (2003; 2008) highlight how many African, coloured and Indian schools under apartheid set about avidly encouraging class discussion, debate, and critical thinking that sought to undermine apartheid ideology, and using illustrations, pictures, drama, cultural trips, to question and expose students to the sharing of ideas. In this, the schools believed that persuasive pedagogy went “beyond the classroom boundaries and effected significant changes in the society as well” (Ramos, 2000:17). This suggests that even in conditions of severe repression and domination, many schools, teachers, and students had some sense or understanding of a concept of ‘social justice’ that they employed to make their social realities seem more meaningful and consequential.

For the dissertation, a key challenge was how to conceptualise the nature of social justice in such conditions of severe repression, and to explore the kinds of discourses that at different times many “teachers, students, and other human agents” used to come together to “resist those elements that reproduced the conditions of their existence” (Giroux, 1983:259).

As a short adjunct, and as a way of engaging with this key dilemma, the dissertation thus utilises Nancy Fraser’s concept of social justice to think about the school site (across different historical periods) as a ‘space of new possibility’ where the circumstances and plight of disadvantaged students are transformed. Fraser (2007:27) argues that inequalities and disadvantages in schools can be limited and mitigated when the concepts of redistribution, representation, and recognition are applied, especially in situations where student agency

and learning is actively promoted, and notions of self-worth, self-respect, and personal identity are accentuated.

In that respect, Fraser provides key concepts and processes that help to think about how greater representivity, access, and agency exercised in schools and society can create and embed tangible frameworks of 'social justice'. As such, the next sections explore Fraser's concept of social justice and its three arms of recognition, representation and redistribution, and suggest that 'understandings of social justice' can be attained in the most adverse conditions, depending on the extent to which the 'vulnerable' institutions, groups of people, or individuals commit themselves to its pursuit (Fraser, 2007).

### **3.5. SECTION C: NANCY FRASER**

#### **3.5.1. What is social justice?**

Debates about social justice predictably focus on relations amongst fellow citizens, especially with regard to claims for socioeconomic (more egalitarian) redistribution and claims for legal or cultural recognition. On the one hand, redistribution claims usually focus on economic inequities between classes, institutions, or groups of people, with appeals made either to the national public for a fairer share of the national pie, or for interventions in national economies that change the ways in which economic benefits are distributed. On the other hand, appeals are made to the national conscience to end nationally institutionalized disrespect and discrimination, and to find ways to better accommodate enforced difference amongst citizens by focusing on issues of greater representation and identity making. In either situation, whether the matter concerns redistribution, greater representivity, recognition, class differentials or status hierarchies, the unit of analysis for social justice is normally the extent to which structures can be reorganised and opportunities given that make people think differently about their circumstances – whether that be racial and social class barriers, poor resources, overcrowding, career choices, the worlds around them, or their future prospects (McInerney, 2004:2-3).

In essence, social justice comprises of the distribution of different goods - both material things like better access to jobs and non-tangible things such as social relationships (Rawls, 1971) -

that are relational in how in both instances people are expected to treat each other with respect and to confer dignity on each other in a variety of contexts (Gewirtz, 1998).

In this regard, Young (1990:16) provides an expanded notion of social justice that includes “all aspects of institutional rules and relations insofar as they are subject to potential collective action” and highlights a variety of dimensions that need to constantly be engaged. For Young (1990), social justice is fundamentally tied to “five faces of injustice and oppression”, namely exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Exploitation in the first instance refers to the transfer of the fruits of labour from one group to another (for example, women in the domestic sphere giving up the fruits of their labour to men) (Harvey, 1993:106-7), whereas marginalisation implies the expulsion of people from participating in social life in ways that cause severe material deprivation and even extermination. Powerlessness highlights the lack of ‘authority, status, and sense of self’ that would permit individuals to be listened to with respect, while cultural imperialism points to the dominance of stereotypic behaviour whereby certain group experiences are not recognised within the dominant culture. Violence refers to the fears associated with random unprovoked attacks that have no motive except to damage, humiliate or destroy people.

As such, Fraser (2007) argues that the pursuit of social justice entails confronting each of these dimensions in social and institutional life in ways that bring a level of participatory parity to bear on society. Social justice then entails the social arrangements that are created that allows all members of society to interact with one another as peers - both in the economic sense and in relation to established status orders of society and culturally defined hierarchies of status.

Crucially, for the dissertation, Fraser’s theory of social justice helps to ask how notions of redistribution and recognition may be understood in relation to severely adverse and abject conditions in the past that actively reproduced societal disparity and misalignment. It further offers ways to question how teachers in the past understood notions of social justice, recognition and redistribution, and how they set about developing practices that directly confronted their oppressive surroundings. In that regard, it opens the way to question whether redistribution only needs to comprise of economic capital, or whether it can also entail the collective sharing of intellectual goods that deliver levels of critical thinking that

allow people to operate in their new worlds in more equitable ways. The same applies to how recognition is understood, and whether it can be more simply understood as ‘equitable relationships’ that foster understandings of the world that lead to more productive social interactions and mutual respect for different identities.

For the dissertation, given the levels of disadvantage, marginalisation, oppression, violence and social discord promoted under apartheid, the concept of social justice can contribute to understanding how the ‘disadvantaged and the marginalised’ in the period 1968 to 1990 engaged with their statuses of difference - politically, socially, educationally and economically- and how they sought to advance their positions under conditions of limited opportunity, poverty, poor schooling performance, early school leaving and severe economic deprivation and social discontent (Ladd, 2012).

For the schooling context, this could entail asking whether students were encouraged in the past to actively engage in various schooling activities, and to take responsibilities and leadership roles and decisions in various capacities as prefects, group leaders, magazine editors, student representatives, and sports or club leaders and organisers. It could also involve understanding the commitment of schools to reconcile their students with the realities of the world after school through organising field trips and exposing them to contemporary discourses that allowed them to make informed decisions. Moreover, it could include asking whether conceptual scaffolding was provided within school curricula that allowed students to think comprehensively about how to overcome economic, cultural and political disadvantage and marginalisation (Keddie, 2012). Lastly, it could be about whether the ‘idea of a good society’ was projected where ethics of mutuality and universality was encouraged that bound students together as ‘recognisable humans’ through a system of duties and obligations, that included everyone in forms of moral and social life that did not leave “behind particular affiliations, feelings, commitments, or desires” (Young, 1990:105).

### **3.5.2. Redistribution, recognition and representation**

Fraser’s social justice theory suggests that the application of social justice as the encouragement of parity in participation, would overcome a variety of injustices and help dismantle institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating “on par with others as full partners in social interaction” (Keddie, 2012). Fraser (1995; 1997; 2008)



highlights that people in society often encounter three distinct facets of discriminations: redistribution in the economic sphere, recognition in the socio-cultural sphere and representation in the political sphere.

### **3.5.2.1. Redistribution**

Fraser (1996:6-7) outlines that the politics of redistribution is associated with the unequal distribution of material resources between groups in a society. Examples include “exploitation (having the fruits of one’s labour appropriated for the benefit of others); economic marginalisation (being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labour altogether); and deprivation (being denied an adequate material standard of living)”. The unequal material distribution occasion in people failing to participate as peers (at the same level), culminating in the binary of happiness and distress.

Importantly, the politics of redistribution curbs educational inequalities. The redistribution of material resources accords the students from poorly resourced schools to have access to resources that enable them to compete at par with the students from well-resourced schools. In this regard Grace (2012:81) quoting the Plowden Report (1967) outlined that schools in deprived areas should be given priority in many respects. The first step must be to raise the schools with low standards to the national average, the second quite deliberately to make them better.

### **3.5.2.2. Recognition**

Fraser’s (1997) politics of recognition targets injustices understood as cultural. Examples include cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one’s own), non-recognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative and interpretative practices of one’s culture), and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions). Elucidating the adverse the effects of non - recognition Fraser (1995:71 quoting Taylor, 1995) notes that

non-recognition or misrecognition ... can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect,

it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need.

Thus, the politics of recognition focuses on how people are regarded in relation to the social markers or distinctive attributes that are ascribed to them and which they often regard as culturally bound (Fraser & Honneth, 2003) such as race, gender, social class and nationality. Importantly these social markers or distinctive attributes are associated with particular social respect, privileges that consequently in most cases frames individuals' forms of self-esteem, self-worth, respect, dignity and agency. Importantly the politics of recognition break down all barriers created by the social markers and ensures that dominant discourses do not promote group differences, status, stereotypes and deny other group the same or equal experiences and opportunities. In this regard Fraser (2007) outlines that participatory parity would be prevented through a hierarchical status order when institutionalised patterns of cultural value depreciate certain attributes associated with people or the activities in which they are engaged in.

Fraser's concept of recognition is fundamental in challenging discrimination, exploitation and oppression, discouraging cultural domination and exclusion. It promotes inclusion in schools. Schools are urged not to discriminate against students from participating in schooling activities based on their social class background, geographical location, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, economic status and religion. It is implicit from the concept of recognition that when students are not rejected they regard themselves as full human beings with the potential to compete with any other people. More so, being recognised and given educational access and opportunities motivates the students to exert their best efforts. Besides, recognition promotes social order and cohesion.

### **3.5.2.3. Representation**

The politics of representation endeavours to eliminate obstacles in the political sphere. Fraser (1997) outlines that representation is concerned about social belonging – who is regarded as a member of the community and who has the right to make decisions, and claims for social justice. The politics of representation ensures that all people are not denied the opportunity to participate as equals in all social arenas. Thus no racial, gender, age, class markers will deprive people from participating in political and decision making matters.

Political representation also connects the students to their societal and contextual narratives, which is significant in broadening their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in society.

The politics of representation is relevant in schools in developing the students' agency and capabilities to make independent decisions. The schools can allow the students to take up positions of responsibility such as class monitors, prefects, leaders of various sporting and club activities, and student representative councils. Such representation will nurture the students' agency, leadership qualities and entailing them to become accountable, independent and active citizens who can voice out their concerns and opinions.

Indeed it is important for schools to embrace all the three dimensions of social justice as Fraser's (2008:282) slogan suggests: "No redistribution or recognition without representation". These three dimensions of social justice are imperative in curbing the challenges precipitated by the social, cultural and political differences. They encourage schools to create education systems that promote equality, students' agency, self-realisation, self-worth, respect, dignity and assertiveness.

### **3.6. CONCLUSION**

In exploring different theories to better understand some of the key dilemmas highlighted in the dissertation - namely how education delimits the learning of the marginalised and vulnerable and whether by "working towards justice, fairness and equity in education" education was, or can be used, to close social and economic differences between students (Griffiths, 1998:3) – this chapter sought to show how and why people and society are connected in the way they are, why they act in the ways they do, as well as how they socially connect to make sense of their collective lives.

The purpose of the chapter was to lay the groundwork for thinking about the stories and lives of past Cape Town students that lie at the centre of the project, and to better understand their learning, their engagement with their individual challenges, and what they say about themselves and their 'accomplishments' in the deeply unequal world of apartheid South Africa.

The further aim was to develop a framework that helped to explain how the home backgrounds of the participants in the study, historical moments in their schooling experiences, the kinds of learning they were exposed to, and the kinds of people they interacted with, may have come together to shape their thinking, their decision making, and their planning as they went about their adult lives.

The next chapter introduces the study's main focus and explains the methodology that was used to explore how the learning of past students influenced their subsequent lives, decisions, and choices.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY - TOOLKITS, STRUCTURES, AND MEANING MAKING

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

For the dissertation the key goal was to understand what it was that a group of students (over the period 1968-1990) at a Cape Town high school under apartheid took away with them that influenced their overall learning and subsequent lives? The main aim was to open up and expand ways of thinking about schooling and learning under apartheid. To do this, the challenge was how to develop an integrated research approach that also convincingly grasped how a particular school culture and climate in a particular period and social location embedded itself within the lives of a group of individuals in ways that helped them make sense of their realities and possible futures (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Merriam, 1998).

In this respect, the first challenge for the dissertation was how to engage with the philosophical and sociological realities of the different individuals in ways that fully appreciated that all of them had unique life experiences that triggered various subjective views of their individual realities. In other words, the challenge was how to appropriate the multiple realities that existed amongst all the different participants (Krauss, 2005:758; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:6) in ways that said something meaningful about their common learning experiences and lives.

The second challenge for the dissertation was how to grapple with the ways in which these realities came to be known for each of them, and which knowledge forms shaped the ways in which their different realities became visible. The third challenge was to embrace methodological practices that provided access to the different forms of knowledge about the various kinds of schooling and learning experiences that shaped the lives of the different participants (Krauss, 2005:758).

The dissertation, in engaging with the above three challenges, sought further to better grasp the capriciousness, complexity, and volatility of the changing social environments and challenges that influenced the schooling and learning of students (Back, 2007:164; Ortner, 2003).

For this, chapter 4 outlines the chosen sociological and historical toolkit used in the dissertation, aligned to the particular paradigm, basic belief system, and research world view that guided how the toolkit is utilised (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:30), what methods and strategies were used to collect appropriate data, and the ways preferred to analyse the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:244; Patton, 2002:255).

In terms of structure, the chapter initially describes the study and its key starting dilemmas, then engages with the nature and value of conducting a qualitative study at both the conceptual and practical level, and thereafter shifts to a description of the research process that was followed, and the choices that were made in both the research design and its practice.

#### **4.2. RATIONALE AND KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The key rationale for exploring what a group of students at a Cape Town high school under apartheid (during the period from 1968 to 1990) took away with them into their adult lives is that the role of education worldwide not only has different origins and develops differently over time, but is unceasingly informed by different social and historical conditions. As such, different roles and functions of schools shape particular kinds of relationships between schools and society, as well as the policy frameworks and historical conditions that give form and expression to educational practices in those contexts (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009:6-7).

How these are understood and operationalised in a particular context is crucial to understanding what is most valued in particular societies at particular times and what is regarded as legitimate learning within its schools at different times (Soudien 2007; Mills & Gale, 2010). In particular, it points to the kinds of expectations and aspirations of different students at different times, and how particular kinds of teaching and learning help to organise these.

In exploring how learning is given meaning in particular historical conditions, the dissertation sought to comprehend the role, function, and relationship of education in the lives of a group of 'disadvantaged' students under apartheid, and to examine how issues of race, social class, gender, culture, and geographical location intersected to produce particular kinds of schooling and learning experiences for each of them. The first goal of the dissertation was

thus to open up and expand ways of thinking about schooling and learning in a particular period under apartheid, and to understand the nature of the political and economic system and apartheid laws at that time.

But perhaps more importantly, the second key goal of the project was to grapple with how a group of students, through their learning, were *socialised* under apartheid and how they navigated their schooling space to develop particular outlooks for their future lives. In particular, the dissertation sought to comprehend the complex ways in which the agency of the students intersected with the structure and history of a Cape Town high school that ‘served’ a given population group under apartheid, and to examine the ways in which these gave meaning to what they (as students) learnt and took away with them into their adult lives.

The main research question for the dissertation was:

- How did students at Victoria High School in the period 1968 to 1990 mediate what they were taught, the cultures and climate of the school, and their personal learning, growth, and life expectations?

In engaging with the above question, the dissertation sought to uncover:

- What were the connections between the schooling experiences of past students and their life contexts and backgrounds?
- What were the kinds of ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ that embedded themselves within the thinking and lives of the group of Victoria High School students once they left the school?
- What did the students have to say about the learning that they encountered at Victoria High School that for them had a lasting effect or imprint on their lives?
- What learning practices did they identify that had the most telling influence on how they understood their lives at the time, and that helped their subsequent thinking and decision making?

#### **4.3. KEY DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL DECISIONS**

In order to respond to the above research questions, the dissertation adopted two key conceptual and methodological decisions from the outset, tied to key dilemmas in the study’s conceptualisation.

The first decision was to anonymise the name of the Cape Town school that the participants attended during the period 1968 to 1990, and to give it the pseudonym Victoria High. This anonymity was further extended to the names of the past students that chose to be part of the study.

The decision was not based on any potential damage or hurt to the institution or its past students. Rather, the decision was based on a choice of whether to relate the history of a particular institution and to highlight the kinds of learning engendered by that institution in a particular historical period, or to instead focus more directly on telling the story about the learning and life experiences of various students who attended the same institution during the same historical juncture. Related to this was the view that using the 'real name' of the institution lent itself to the development of (and preoccupation with) a historical narrative of the chosen school's development and its contribution to learning, whereas anonymising all the participants and the institution allowed a focus on the broader thematic dimensions of learning processes tied to schools based on particular historical conditions and social contexts under apartheid.

It was felt that the study's 'focus on the learning that past students took away with them into their lives' would be better accentuated if pseudonyms were used in all aspects of the study. It would focus the reader more on what the students said about their schooling and adult lives and their learning, and less on following the associated historical narrative of a particular school. A further rationale was that it was hoped that the story about an anonymised high school and its students in the period 1968 to 1990 would be understood and regarded as illustrative, with a few key differences, of other similar high school 'stories' in the region at that time.

The second decision was to use the terms coloured, white, Indian and African in the dissertation. These terms were formally constructed and formalised under apartheid, especially from the 1960s and were racial labels caused great consternation, conflict, and protest in Cape Town in the period under review, as well as huge debate about how to engage with these labels on a daily basis. Many students, parents, teachers, and communities were deeply uncomfortable with the use of racial categorisations during the period 1960 to 1990 and strongly resisted its usage.



It was felt that the dissertation needed to capture and respect this tension, with a further concern that using the racial classifications in the text of the dissertation may also contribute to reinforcing or authenticating the ‘social force’ of these ‘old categories’. On the other hand, the dissertation needed to reflect what was actually happening and being said at a particular juncture in Cape Town’s history, and further give the readers ways of following the complex narrative of the different students that were navigating uneven and ambiguous social and geographical spaces during that period.

As such, it was decided to use the terms coloured, white, Indian and African in the dissertation in their most simplistic form to identify and describe the various role players within the different narratives provided. In doing so, the dissertation acknowledges that the racial categories are specific historical constructions tied to a past social structure in which this hierarchical social ordering based on race was inscribed into the fabric of life in South Africa in ways that continue to cause tension into the present. In accentuating a particular approach to this, the terms coloured, white, Indian, or African are used in the text as adjectives (white population, white students) rather than as nouns (for example, whites) as a way of declaring that the classifications were contested constructions and descriptions under apartheid and therefore are not treated as ‘natural’, ‘real’, or ‘authentic’.

#### **4.4. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY**

In terms of a research worldview, Cohen and Manion (1994:36) suggests that qualitative A research is most appropriate for a study tht focuses on individuals or small groups, especially where the objective is “to understand the subjective world of human experience and to get inside the heads of research participants and understand from within”. Furthermore, it is the qualitative paradigm that provides rich description of complex phenomena in ways that can track unique or unexpected events, illuminate how actors with widely differing stakes and roles experience and interpret events, give voice to those whose views are rarely heard, conduct initial explorations to develop theories, and generate and even test hypotheses that help move towards social explanation (Sofaer, 1999:1101).

Situated as it is in the ‘emic perspective of research participants’ (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), it is also the qualitative paradigm that better allows the telling of stories from participants’

points of view and that offers understandings and interpretations of their subjective experiences. The qualitative approach contributes to understanding “the context of events alongside the events themselves” (Sofaer, 1999:1102) and allows for meaningful explanation of both how participants engage with their subjective worlds and experiences, as well as how they comprehend and make meaning in those worlds. It is further this approach that retains the integrity of the situation by ‘getting inside the person’, collecting relevant details and interpretations, and understanding him/her from within (Cohen *et al.*, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

For the dissertation the main value of the qualitative paradigm was that it offered important ways of bringing together key snippets of information about the lives of different individuals in ways that brought psychological and emotional unity to their interpretive experiences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:7; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:4-5), while also capturing the historical, political, social, economic and school contexts that underpinned them and those around them.

Notably, in utilising the qualitative paradigm the dissertation more specifically employed life history (4.4.1) and life course (4.4.4) techniques to locate individuals in time and space, and to interpret their memories and perceptions in ways that bring fresh perspectives to how they internalised learning over their lifetimes. It was felt that these techniques not only provided the necessary insights into the broader human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans, but also helped to comprehend the complexities of peoples day-to-day decision making and the ultimate consequences that (sequentially) play out in their lives (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

In this respect, Cole and Knowles (2001:11) note that often “comprehending some of the complexities, complications, and confusions within the life of just one member of a community” provide important ways of understanding larger communities, how individuals are placed within those communities, and how meanings are made therein. This allows ‘history’ and ‘understandings of past lives’ to be more effectively used to rethink the present (Foucault, 1977).

For the dissertation, the above noted techniques were utilised in very particular ways, summoning both their conceptual and methodological dimensions.

#### 4.4.1. Life history as conceptual tool

What does the life history technique entail conceptually? For Tierney (2000:539) “life history is both a culturally produced artefact and an interpretive document”, and as such enables a “reflective, retrospective narration of past encounters” while also providing the “semiotic means” by which sense is made of the world. This leads to a better understanding of how people experience the world at particular times (Atkinson, 1998:123).

The life history technique further brings together insights on a diverse range of people, connecting individuals to their families, outside groups, organisations and entities in ways that situate how they make meaning of their different experiences. In capturing the relationship between individuals and society, the local and the national, the past and the present, and the public and the private, the life history technique connects micro-historical (individual) experiences to macro-historical (history of the time) frameworks (Bertaux, 1981; Riessman, 2002) that highlight the more intimate workings of both structure and agency (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006:5).

Moreover, what life history work illuminates very well is that peoples’ lives cannot be hermetically compartmentalised into work personas, home/social personas, or individual personas and that what happens in one area of peoples’ lives invariably impacts upon, or has important implications for, other areas of their lives. There is thus always a critical interactive relationship between individuals’ lives, their perceptions, experiences, and historical and social contexts and events (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:2).

Life history work also reminds about the interplay of key power relations in the everyday living of individuals, acknowledging that all individual experiences are inherently political and deeply embedded in relations of power (Dhunpath, 2000; Wicks & Whiteford, 2006). In seeing how individuals negotiate their identities and consequently experience, create and make sense of the rules and roles of the social worlds (school and life) in which they live and interact (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:2), the life history technique does not gloss over the political, economic, social, and educational contexts in which individuals interact but instead illustrates the key roles these play in influencing and shaping schooling experiences, thinking, and individual lives. Dhunpath (2000:544) observes that it is this technique that perhaps best captures “how motives and practices come to reflect the most intimate intersections of

institutional and individual experience in the postmodern world". In that respect the life history technique is invariably "context specific" and captures context-bound narratives (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006:4). It is its 'context-specificity' that best shows the complex relationship between what individuals do and their everyday contexts.

Importantly, life history enquiries are not reductionist collections of lived experiences that convey particular meanings or 'truths'. Rather, they offer representations of human experiences that draw different parties into interpretive processes that make meaning and form judgments based on different readings of 'living texts' and 'spaces' as viewed through the lenses of different realities (Cole & Knowles, 2001:10-11). In the latter regard, the life history technique helps to connect the individual to the fabric of societal culture and history. It does so by tying aspects of individuals' psychic pasts with the 'things' and 'life texts' that they carry around with them, thereby allowing for given situations to be seen in new ways and as different episodes in different evolving stories (Freeman, 2010:8). In the end, as Wieder (2002:197) notes, the true value and beauty of life history work "is that it is human and deeply personal".

Life history technique also offers crucial methodological opportunities to collect rich data, recording the opinions and life experiences of people that were invariably disadvantaged in some way or other or previously excluded from research attention (Reissman, 1993). This collection of rich data is critical for educational research as it provides a window into individual accounts of students, textured by particular interpretations of their individual life experiences, the social circumstances in which their stories unfold, and the ways in which these continue to make them as individuals, active agents in contemporary life (Atkinson, 1998; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Roets & Goedgeluck, 1999). As such, the section below describes the methodological value of life history techniques for 'collecting' and 'producing' data that would otherwise not be available for analysis.

#### **4.4.2. Life history as methodology and writing technique**

For the dissertation, the key challenge was how to overcome the scarcity of information on the school and student views of life at that time, as well as the limited availability of rich conceptualisations of activities or practices tied to schools and students that lived under apartheid. There were insufficient written records of both the highlighted school and the

students who attended it, as well as about how schooling experiences framed individual students' aspirations, opportunities and perspectives under apartheid, what they did when they left school, and who and what they became in subsequent adult life. Thus, adopting a life history focus provided important 'exploratory' data and insights that became the main way of collecting data about the powerful institutional forces within the chosen school as well as perspectives from a variety of its students. This data would otherwise not have been available for use or analysis (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:2).

In terms of process, the standard process in life history work is to firstly collect data about individual lives. This data can include, but is not limited to interviews, observations, focus groups, journals, diaries, photographs, newspapers, magazines, letters, personal stories, essays, autobiographical writings, official documents, statistics and records, and research reports (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006:273-277). For the dissertation, in-depth interviews were used alongside a collection of report cards, birth records, school registers, a variety of photographs, letters, and newspapers, as well as recent articles and books published on similar schools under apartheid.

Secondly, life history work normally encompasses a wide genre of writing styles – life narratives, testimonials, auto-ethnographies, oral histories and autobiographies (Tierney, 1998:307). Efforts are usually focused on presenting these expressions with a beginning, middle, and end (Ojermark, 2007:5). Thirdly, life history works can either accentuate segmented portions of one life, or present a complete life with the full details of the life recollected. In both situations, written or transcribed oral accounts are usually edited, interpreted and then presented in conjunction with other sources.

Approached slightly differently in this dissertation, the life histories of each participant were first captured as fourteen separate student individual narratives and then collated and analysed to extract the main themes in each of the narratives. These themes then assisted to shed light on the issues examined.

#### **4.4.3. How life history narratives were used in the dissertation**

The 'iterative nature' (allowing for new and at times unexpected findings to emerge) of the life history technique (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006) required a good degree of pragmatism when engaging with the study participants, where care had to be taken when listening to different

perspectives to avoid face-value meaning making, and to ensure follow-up questions and clarifications.

All data and every small detail were treated as vital. Study participants were asked a wide range of questions to obtain a holistic picture of their lives in various contexts, covering when they were born, where they lived at different stages of their lives, the number of siblings in their families, schools attended, reasons for enrolling at the school(s), how they travelled to school, subjects offered at the school, subjects selected, extramural activities, pedagogical practices, friends selected, how they were defined under apartheid, what they aspired to, their social class aspirations, their careers chosen, what key lessons they took away from the school, if and when they married, separated or divorced, their children and their 'dreams for them', as well as the schools that their children currently attend and their views on that.

Given that the dissertation was looking to also understand institutional practices and approaches, care was also taken to capture details about educator-student interactions and closer-up understandings of the lived experiences of both teachers and students at different times in the two decades that I explored. As such, the voices and viewpoints of four senior teachers (who taught at the school in the period 1968-1990) were further secured. Their viewpoints added crucial insights about the historical context of schooling during that period and a better perspective about the ethos that was unfolding around them and the students, and the significance of school cultures and school climates at the time. The added value of interviewing retired educators was that it illustrated how under apartheid chosen educator practices and pedagogies did not occur outside of the lives and contexts of students, and key educational transactions evolved within the nexus of student-teacher interaction (Goodson, 1992:3).

Importantly for the dissertation, the life history technique was approached and treated as 'always interactive'. On the one hand it was crucial to approach 'what informants believed as 'facts about really happened' and therefore useful for analysing individual perspectives' (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006) and to ensure that participants 'owned' the data that they provided. This, it was hoped, would contribute to personal introspection, comprehension, and (if needed) potential change. Wicks and Whiteford, 2006 observe in this regard that when important incidents take on significance in peoples' lives, this may lead not only to greater

reflection (on the incidents) but also enable people to distil useful guidelines that inform future decisions in similar situations. As such, they have emotional value that people often reflect upon and learn from (Atkinson, 1998).

On the other hand, it was critical to approach the life history interviews and data as 'interactive texts' that reflected collaborative efforts between participants, the people around them, and the researcher. Goodson (1992) remind that life history research is invariably an intervention and interruption in the lives of participants given that the life narrative is central to individual self-identity and that each narrative construction has a particular temporal orientation. It was important to thus always remind participants that the narratives and the collected data were *jointly produced* by the particular interactions between the researcher and themselves (Watson & Watson-Franke, 1985:15), and that its main value was that it identified a myriad of clues as to how they as individuals negotiated their lives over time, how they made meaning in those moments, and how they responded to significant 'watersheds' in their lives (Goodson, 1992).

Having said that, a key challenge in utilising the life history technique was that there were inevitably quite significant differences in how participants defined their personal testimonies or narratives, which often led to the 'main body' of their different narratives not always expressed in common, logical, or coherent ways (Riessman, 2002). It was quite daunting to, on the one hand, capture individual attitudes and behaviours in time, place, and space while taking into account that in the process of 'constructing particular narratives' certain information or insights had been consciously omitted or considered 'unimportant' (Ojemark, 2007). It was also a huge challenge to capture both the conscious (what people remembered) and unconscious (what people chose not to remember or what they didn't speak about) aspects of their personal narratives (Reissman, 2002). For this reason the dissertation chose to also employ/look at the developmental dimensions of life course theory and to tease out how various elements thereof could assist in collecting the kind of research data required to develop 'a deeper insight' into the contributions of the various study participants.

#### **4.4.4. Life course theory as concept**

As noted above, a key limitation in the life history technique was that in privileging the 'voice of the insider' and highlighting the various transitional life experiences of individuals from

their perspective, the life histories struggled to explain human agency and the ways in which individuals actually influenced and changed their everyday encounters as a result of their (agentic) interactions with those around them in their daily lives. Life histories also don't easily locate individual human experiences within overall, common, and shared living situations, events and interactions.

As such, the life course theory or perspective was seen as providing an alternative or complementary way of viewing how different "individuals experience their present and past lives in different situations", by following "groups of individuals into the future", and collecting "a continuous record of their experiences as they occur". This includes calling attention to how historical forces have influenced their family, education, and work roles, and how historical time, social location and culture affect individual experiences at different life stages (Elder, 2003:593). Wethington (2005:115) asserts that the life course perspective offers an important way of studying 'patterns of different lives' as they unfold across time and space; integrating disparate explanations of individual or group difference and addressing the (im)balance between stability and change across the life spans of different individuals.

Crucially, the life course technique approaches the human life cycle as comprising of a variety of important but distinct stages. These include transitions or changes in roles and statuses that represent distinct departures from prior roles and statuses such as starting school, entering puberty, leaving school, adulthood, getting a first job, getting married, leaving home, and retirement (Hutchinson, 2011). As Mayer and Tuma (1990:3) note, the life course technique deals with:

The social processes that extend over the individual life span or over significant portions of it, especially [with regard to] the family life cycle, educational and training histories, and employment and occupational careers.

As a multilevel phenomenon, the 'life course' is seen as ranging from structured pathways through social institutions and organizations to the social trajectories of individuals and their individual developmental pathways (Elder, 1994:5). These different stages are not expected to be sequential or to proceed according to a given sequence. Rather, they together constitute the sum total of an individual's actual experiences and comprise of life segments that for various people don't tend to vary much across time and place (Giele & Elder,



1998:22). For example, the family is seen as a micro-social group within a macro-social context, as a “collection of individuals with shared history who interact within ever-changing social contexts across ever increasing time and space” (Bengtson & Allen, 1993:470).

For the dissertation, this approach to the human life cycle is particularly helpful as it highlights key transitional moments and associated developments in all human life cycles - such as schooling, adulthood, or work and marriage.

#### **4.4.4.1. The different dimensions of life course theory**

Fundamentally, the life course technique emphasises human agency in shaping life trajectories, the influence of socio-historical and geographical location, the relevance of past conditions or developments in informing present thinking, and the extent to which individual lives are linked and connected across time and space. Life course theory encompasses ‘orientations towards the future’ and an eye for alternative ‘possible selves’ (Hitlin & Elder, 2007:182-183). In that regard, Hutchinson (2011:2) defines life course theory as attempting to:

- Understand the continuities as well as the twists and turns in the paths of different individual lives;
- Recognise the influence of historical changes on overall human behaviour;
- Recognise the importance in the timing of lives, not just in terms of chronological age, but also in terms of biological age, psychological age, social age and spiritual age;
- Emphasise the ways in which humans are interdependent and that the family is the primary arena for experiencing and interpreting the wider social world;
- Highlight the extent to which humans make choices and construct their own life journeys within systems of opportunities and constraints;
- Show the degree of diversity within different kinds of life journeys; and
- Capture the key linkages between early life experiences and later experiences in adulthood.

For example, in relation to human agency Bandura (1986) identifies three modes that influence the functioning and life circumstances of individuals, namely:

- Personal agency that is exercised individually where personal influence is used to shape environmental events or personal behaviour;
- Proxy agency that is exercised to influence others who have greater resources to act on their behalf to meet needs and to accomplish goals; and
- Collective agency that is exercised at the group level when people act together to meet needs and to accomplish goals (Hutchinson, 2010:27).

For Bandura (1986), individuals use all three modes in different situations. Thus, in some situations personal agency would allow for extensive individual choice within different life trajectories, where individuals plan and choose between options resulting in different or unique experiences, while in other situations the life course would be influenced by a variety of historical and social constraints or opportunities. In cases where families experience economic deprivation for instance, parents would apply proxy agency to adapt family approaches to work and send adolescent sons to work, or transfer domestic responsibilities to adolescent daughters. In both, individuals make thoughtful, proactive and self-controlled decisions and adaptations about institutional involvements and social relationships that don't only involve their lives but also the lives of others (Shanahan, 2000). Groups or communities may also decide, after a variety of consultations, to act together to bring about change (Elder, 2000).

However, human agency is invariably constrained by the opportunities and challenges imposed or made available, or according to the social and historical contexts in which individuals interact. For example, geopolitical events (e.g. war), economic cycles (e.g. recessions), or social and cultural ideologies often shape individual perception and choice and have the power to alter the course of human development. Alternatively, as happened in South Africa under apartheid, national policies and ideologies may determine where people live, where they attend schools, and where they work or the kinds of jobs they can access. In the latter scenario, when individuals or communities experience particular conditions, they may either operate within the constraints and limited opportunities provided, or they may rebel against things like overcrowded schools and meagre teaching resources. Lodge and Nasson (1991:3) note, for example, that individuals or communities may try to alter their experiences or thinking at such times by:

Refusing to accept the educational system and providing sustained and determined rebellion against dominant rule. In South Africa, this ended in the 1990s with the unbanning of the exiled black political parties, the release of their leaders and the beginning of negotiation with the apartheid government for a major political transformation. This was a decade when the pillars of apartheid finally gave way under social, economic and political pressures from the black majority. It was the time when ethnic politics – ‘black politics’, ‘white politics’, ‘coloured politics’, ‘Indian politics’ – became simply South African politics.

It is important to note in the latter regard that historical periods are all distinct, with each period uniquely shaping the social trajectories of individuals, families, education, and work and giving individuals particular experiences and exposures that stimulate certain profound habits, lifestyles, and ways of thinking tied to what is available and possible for them (Elder, 1998). For instance, under apartheid students that exited schooling had a set package of jobs that they could access that determined for them what kinds of occupations or professions they could pursue. Ironically, in earlier periods some of the same students would have been able to access professional careers that they would not otherwise have been (under apartheid).

As such, it is important to acknowledge that individuals live different lives during different historical moments (Elder, 1996). Differences in birth years expose individuals to different historical worlds, constraints, options, perceptions of events, and world experiences. People that grew up during the Great Depression, World War I, World War II, or the apartheid and post-apartheid periods would have different life patterns, encourage different life aspirations and opportunities, and be shaped by different political, economic, social, and educational circumstances at those times.

In these experiences, individuals are often connected to world events or developments through family experiences and the fates of family members in previous situations. In this way, past fortunes or misfortunes are shared through relationships and historical events that shape whether they persist for future generations or not (Elder, 1998), with one generation transmitting reverberations of the historical circumstances that shaped their life history to the next (living through the feminist movement, for example). The timing and conditions

under which earlier life events and behaviours occur in the family (e.g. dropping out of school, witnessing domestic abuse) also often sets off a chain reaction of experiences for individuals and their families (e.g. reproduction of poverty, a cycle of family violence) (Shanahan, 2000). In this way the past plays a crucial role in the later life outcomes of different individuals, often affecting their socioeconomic status, mental health, physical functioning, and marital patterns and regulating their behaviour through particular expectations, rewards, and punishments (Hutchinson, 2001:24).

As Elder (1994:6) notes:

No principle of life course study is more central than the notion of *interdependent lives*. Human lives are typically embedded in social relationships with kin and friends across the life span. Social regulation and support occur in part through these relationships. Processes of this kind are expressed across the life cycle of socialisation, behavioural exchange, and generational succession. The misfortune and the opportunity of adult children, as well as their personal problems, become intergenerational.

Therefore, a crucial dimension of utilising aspects of the life course technique in the dissertation was to explore the extent to which the lives of individuals were interconnected with those of their family members and their pasts, as these probably played key roles in explaining the various tensions and conflicts that were experienced, and subsequent life decisions that were made.

#### **4.4.4.2. Life course theory as methodology**

For the dissertation, the life course technique helped to understand how cultural, political, economic, and social circumstances in the period 1968 to 1990 were tied to important human and historical developments and transitions that inevitably shaped the ways in which past students experienced schooling under apartheid and how they thought about their futures. These included aspects of their personal histories, those of their families and communities, as well as previous events like student protests (1976 Soweto uprising), or the emergence and establishment of strong teacher organisations or civil movements (TLSA, NUM, SACOS).

Life course theory is useful in pointing out how the lives of individuals are tied to overall life stages, as well as the life transitions of families, other groups or individuals, and historical moments, and how these influence available opportunities, thinking, and lives. It further highlights the importance of linking student 'stories' to key developmental stages in their lives, as well as the extent to which each of the participants was able to exhibit different levels of agency in each of these stages. This helped to emphasise the complex relationship between power and privilege, and personal choice and individual limitation in different life stages, and across different generations (Elder, 1998:9).

Utilised in a particular way in the dissertation, engagement with stages across the life course (life course theory) helped to give the fourteen student individual narratives particular form and shape. It further assisted to extract the main themes from each of the narratives in order to analyse and discuss the data.

As such, the main value of the life course technique for the dissertation was that in being used in tandem with the life history technique, the narratives of the participants could take on a particular shape and form, and could be told in a particular way. It was felt that this better captured the significance of time, place, social context, social structure, everyday processes, community and family experiences, social and historical factors, and human meaning-making in the thinking and life experiences of different participants and their schooling encounters.

Having observed the above, it is notable that the dissertation neither provides extensive or detailed life history accounts nor thorough explanations of student experiences across their life courses. These techniques were mainly used in the dissertation to shape the conceptual and ideological orientation of the study, and served as the main methodological vehicles by which key datasets about the lives of the fourteen past students (and the four teachers) were gathered. They gave methodological and conceptual form to the ways in which data was collected, and how the in-depth interviews were conducted, organised, and analysed. They gave analytical direction, shape, and form to the hours of listening to the variety of narratives about the different participants' life experiences and schooling encounters. The sections below outline how interviews were approached and used in the study and what themes and understandings were drawn therefrom that helped address the study's research questions and orientations.

## 4.5. INTERVIEWS

In-depth interviews are regarded as the most useful method to gather ‘deep’ and detailed information from research participants. Apart from answers to a variety of questions that have multiple layers of answering, interviews also offer the researcher ways to observe how participants think through and express their feelings about given situations and experiences, as well as to understand how they attach meaning to their thinking and experiences (Patton, 2002). It is through face-to-face interviews that participants are able display the full range of their communicative skills – verbal and non-verbal – that enable researchers to make meaning thereof (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Rubin and Rubin (1995) observe that interviews open up ways to uncover new areas and unravel intriguing puzzles within the lives of individuals, which further lead to crucial meaning-making collaborations (and knowledge-making) between researchers and research participants.

For the dissertation, in-depth interviews allowed a variety of key ideas, feelings, insights, expectations, and attitudes to emerge (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) about how the participants interacted with Victoria High, and what they thought they took away from the school. The flexibility of the method encouraged a variety of questions and rich debates that would not otherwise have emerged (Patton, 2002), as well as forms of rapport-building and comfortability that opened up new ways of thinking about the issues that were raised. The sections below outline how different aspects were organized in the study’s fieldwork.

### 4.5.1. Multiple Interviews

Through multiple interviews at different times interviewers are afforded opportunities to add to collected data, identify gaps, and to formulate new questions and impressions. Multiple interviews provide the interviewee with more time to think carefully about previous responses and to link these both to previous questions and to new thoughts. Also, multiple interviews generate opportunities for different moments of ‘deep conversation’ with the participants that over time are likely to become more friendly, unthreatening, and encouraging, and lead to interviewees sharing their thoughts more freely. Ortnner (2003:14) observes that it is also sometimes important to conduct such multiple interviews in different places such as “coffee shops, shopping malls, law offices, medical offices, business offices, teachers’ lounges; principals’ offices, social worker offices, hotel lobbies, synagogues,

television studios, and even police departments” to ‘loosen up memories’ and to also allow participants to comfortably share their views. In such cases it is important though to ensure that the chosen venues are quiet, have no distracting background noises, and have minimal chance of interruptions.

For the dissertation, at least four or five (sometimes more) in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the study participants, comprising of between seven to twelve hours of discussion with each of them.

#### **4.5.2. Interview questions**

Successful interviews are dependent on well thought-through and relevant interview questions that encourage participants to share their schooling and life experiences. These can comprise of two kinds of enquiries, namely factual questions and those that need more detailed explanation.

For the dissertation, factual questions included personal information such as age, gender, racial classification under apartheid, social class status (in the past and in present), residential location (in past and present), marital status, family life details, number of children (if any), schools attended, tertiary or other institutions accessed, jobs or profession(s) after leaving school, and qualifications and other awards achieved over lifetime.

Questions that required more detailed explanation included those on family and life background, interesting facts about cultural, religious, and community behaviours, reasons for key decisions in their lives (such as why they chose to enrol at Victoria High), their schooling experiences, the different people that shaped these experiences, the nature of pedagogical practices in the classes, the challenges they faced at the school, most significant occurrences, what they took away from school into their lives, and key questions about their subsequent lives linked to the previous questions (details of the questions are provided in Appendix 2).

#### **4.5.3. The shape of the interviews**

The main goal in all interviews in the study was to capture, through their eyes and narratives, snapshots of past and present experiences that said something about their learning over time, with their understandings of events and developments the main focus of attention. These

understandings arguably informed how each participant came to make key ‘life decisions’ upon exiting the schooling system.

In the above regard, two key methodological devices were used to assist and shape the interviews. Firstly, for each interview it was important to have a firm understanding of key background information of Victoria High, the kinds of students that attended the institution, and a bit of the history of the areas in which they lives. This required extensive background reading before each interview about the history of Cape Town (political, social, economic and educational between 1948 and 1990), the lives and movements of its inhabitants over time, as well as the history of the school. It also required much prior discussion and clarification from colleagues, supervisors, and those with more expertise to clarify key details, events, and developments. Measor & Sikes (1992:244) caution in this regard that often the ‘truths’ that emerge in accounts with research participants are quite different from the actual ‘historical truths’ tied to the lives of these participants. As such, developing these prior insights was important not only to help facilitate interviews but also to triangulate and guide what was being said.

More importantly, the second device employed in the dissertation was to focus mainly on how the words of participants gained ‘force and power’ through their attitudes and actions. This was tied to the view that the ‘moral tales’ of participants, whether sometimes part fabricated or not, had particular value as they always revealed something “interesting and important about the teller’s moral and social universe” (Back, 2007:164).

For this, and aware of the power of the researcher to shape narratives, enormous care was taken in all interviews to speak as little as possible and to listen intently. While this often led to periods of ‘uncomfortable’ silences during interviews while participants collected their thoughts and slowly engaged with what was being asked, it helped to build trust and mutual confidence and respect. Field (2006) observes that intimate and detailed narratives are more achievable when interview processes are conducted in patient, sensitive, slow, and respectful ways that also provide key opportunities and moments to trigger other kinds of memories.

Back (2007:7) refers to this as ‘the art of listening’. He asserts that it is only when researchers ‘really listen to their informants’ that they can truly meaningfully contribute to the craft of social research, and that it is only through ‘careful listening’ that participant ‘voices’ attain



their full meaning in the narratives that are written about them. This was an important ethical dimension of the study.

#### **4.5.4. Interviews as wider conversations**

Care was also taken to start up ‘conversations’ across interviews with individual participants. For this, semi-structured interviews were structured and organised in ways that regularly prodded participants with similar kinds of questions in the different interviews, with the wording of questions often changed, omitted or rearranged for the different interviews to collect new insights on the same question (Cohen *et al.*, 2001:273). Furthermore, in some interviews the partners of participants were allowed to be present, as they often assisted in affirming some of the described experiences and could remind their partners about different events that they had related over their lives. The approach adopted in the above was that all the participants (and their partners) were mature adults that had a firm sense of what was being done and were keen partners in the narratives that were being produced.

This process of developing a ‘wider conversation’ about the school was also helped by in-depth interviews with four educators and principals that were connected to Victoria High during the period 1968 to the mid-1990s. It helped that one of the educators was also a student at the school in the 1960s, which added important ‘outsider’ views for the later analysis of the narratives that were collected.

### **4.6. THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **4.6.1. Ethical dilemmas**

In every educational study ethical, moral and political questions abound about the research focus, how research participants are secured, and the actual experience of conducting research. In particular, the issue of ethics is a dimension that requires careful consideration and close evaluation, especially with regard to participants that were historically marginalised and under-researched under past oppressive governments. It requires following particular ethical procedures as well as carefully thinking through how to best engage with the fieldwork in ways that show respect and consideration for the chosen participants.

Perhaps the main challenge in all qualitative studies is how to always ensure respect for the research participants. Christians (2005:150) suggests in this regard that “the panoramic

exposition of being” and the dialogical encounters between participants and researchers create situations where human beings come together in ways that foster particular moral obligations to each other. He asserts that “when one turns to the face of the other, one not only sees flesh and blood, but a third party also arrives – namely the whole of humanity” (Christians, 2005:150). In other words, research ethics require the researcher to respect both ‘the human other’ and ‘humanity itself’ before the study even begins, and then during the study, as well as after it has been completed.

A further ethical challenge is how to develop narratives that always ‘pay truth the courtesy of serious effort’ and does not “reduce the enigmatic and shifting nature of social existence to caricature and stereotype” (Back, 2007:153). In the study this included how to engage with past student narratives as “pieces of a larger puzzle” that when fitted together provide a vibrant account of how schools influence learning and lives, especially when narratives had to ring ‘individually true’ and at the same time also fit together in neat and coherent ways. In drawing together a sociological and historical account, the goal of the study was to “bring to life the people I worked with and listened to” in ways that conveyed their powerful feelings of pain, pleasure and shame (Ortner, 2003:7) and that invited readers to actively participate in the attached meaning making (Back, 2007:17).

A further ethical requirement in the study was how to ensure issues of privacy, which included allowing participants to decide for themselves what they sought to do, and when and where, in what circumstances and to what extent their personal opinions or information was to be communicated with, or withheld from others (Cohen *et al.*, 2001:61). Where needed, confidentiality had to always be guaranteed and pseudonyms created to protect the identities of study participants. This included making discretionary decisions that even when participants or institutions wanted their ‘real names’ to be used, these would not be accommodated when found that contributions could potentially impact or cause harm to others beside the participants or institutions.

Further ethical requirements included issues of reliability, transferability, and researcher objectivity. In the former, the study was very careful to guard against bias towards the data or the participants, adopting a variety of processes to ensure that certain information was not privileged or particular participants were not chosen above others. Firstly, I (the researcher)

conducted all the interviews and collected all the data. I also transcribed all the interviews and analysed all the documents that were collected to support these. Secondly, I chose the participants according to a set of criteria (availability, schooling across the period 1968-1990, and willingness to partake in the study). Given that the study sought to secure the participation of a wide range of past-students that attended Victoria High in the period under review, items such as previous school performance, subsequent profession, economic status and success, or social profile were deliberately ignored. These latter characteristics would have skewed the data. Lastly, to obtain a good mix of narratives across the period of the study, I targeted a mix of males and females, with participants that all attended the school at different times between 1968-1990. As noted previously, given that the school was designated as one that serviced the coloured population in the period under review, all the participants in the study were from this one apartheid population group (though most would not want to currently be identified as such).

With regard to transferability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that it is crucial to provide rich contextual description and analysis if the findings of studies are to be transferable. This is always more difficult in qualitative research where much of the findings are inevitably context-bound. Normally, transferability rests on the chosen research sample being representative of the population being studied. For the dissertation, a random sampling and snowball approach was used as that it was always going to be difficult to simply find past-students of Victoria High being willing to offer 10-12 hours of their time over a period of a few months. With the focus more on the opinions and different perspectives of former students, it was assumed that all narratives of students in that period would add value to the storyline, and that any students willing to partake (also fitting the criteria of being at the school in the study period, and gender) would not jeopardise the 'transferability' of the main arguments. It was also assumed that readers could learn something from the data and findings presented even though it had particular historical, geographical, and political groundings, and that the arguments were thus transferable. Indeed, the desire to make larger and wider arguments on key issues that could be transferred to other situations is one of the main reasons why the study chose to utilise pseudonyms for the institution and the participants (Merriam, 1998).

Lastly, in terms of objectivity, the starting point of the study was that the life histories that would be generated would always be subjective 'representations of reality' and that various

cultural and other backgrounds would inevitably influence their understanding of their overall lives and experiences (Bertaux, 1981). It was further expected that the researcher would add to this subjectivity in the research decisions that were made, and in the narratives that were collated and written (Connole, 1993:22), given that the researcher was intrinsically caught up in “the process of the creation of textuality” in the space between themselves and the study participants.

Notably however, it was also assumed that every life narrative would contain a “large proportion of factual data (such as dates and places of biographical events) that could be verified” and that reflecting the same social milieu and school context, it would serve as a solid documentary basis to understand certain social realities or phenomena (Ojermark, 2007:6). What was provided in the interviews were also triangulated with school reports, various details captured on people’s facebook pages, what has been captured and written about the school in various articles and books over the past five decades, and what others said about them (people with whom they went to school, where it was possible and appropriate).

In any case, there is arguably a good level of objectivity that is gained through distilling the various narratives in the dissertation (and their detail over the same social context and time period) up to a certain saturation point that when put together allow a certain level of theory and common argument to emerge (Ojermark, 2007:7).

#### **4.6.2. Ethical dimensions of the study**

In terms of research process, both the university and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) granted the study ethical clearance. In the latter case, permission was not really necessary as most of the work on Victoria High was of a formal documentary nature, with both the past-student participants and teachers/principals not tied to the school any longer. However, it was felt that that in order to protect continued association with the school in the future permission would be sought from both the school and the WCED. With regard to the past students, formal permission was sought from each of them given that the youngest participant in the study was in their late-30s. Formal agreements were drawn up with each participant that documented what was expected and anticipated from each party, and explaining how their rights and privacies in relation to the study would thereafter be

protected. Participants were each provided with a copy of this document as well as information of whom (in the Research Development Division at the university) to contact should they seek clarification or have the need to lay a complaint.

#### **4.6.3. Selection procedure**

At the start of the project I assumed that Victoria High would have various school documents, registers, phone details, journals, group and individual pictures and address books of some past students and teachers. The intention was to peruse these documents to understand school cultures and climates and also to help develop criteria by which to choose the bigger sample group of potential study participants (whom to contact and chase up). The intention was to apply a form of random sampling, not in the scientific sense but in the incidental sense (Ortner, 2003:259) as a way of contacting past students that had matriculated in the years between 1968 and 1990. The immediate problem for the study however was that such documents for the two decades were not systematically kept and some did not even exist. The school did not have much data or detail about its history, with the limited information that it had available on its website. As such, all this data needed to be collected through the various interviews.

To start off the process staff members and others connected to the school provided initial leads on past students that could be contacted, which then rapidly spread into a web of contacts that was followed up one by one. It was this network of relationships that thereafter proved invaluable for the study, as different people provided different kinds of information not only on potential contacts but also on the school itself. This process was perhaps the most exciting part of the study and probably yielded the richest data overall (Ortner, 2003:6).

For the study I decided to secure twenty student participants for the project and develop life histories for each of them. This would then serve as the main database for the rest of the study, both in terms of the larger narrative on learning and schooling under apartheid and for the analysis of student perspectives on this period. Candidates were thereafter contacted and three months later a firm sample of twenty student participants (twelve males and eight females) was in place.

While it was gratifying that the sample included a useful mix of professionals and non-professionals, what was worrying however was that most of the initial group were fairly

successful, which could provide a particular bias to what was said. This potential bias was further aggravated later in the project when the six members of the sample that dropped out comprised mainly non-professionals. In the end, I decided to continue with the secured sample for a number of reasons. Firstly, the findings of the study did not depend on a particular kind of student sample, it was their individual stories that were sought and thus the participation of any past student in that period would have been acceptable (except in they were in the same grade as participants already in the study). Secondly, the study's focus was on what students took from their learning into their lives and thus their professional status or success would not overtly create a particular kind of narrative. Thirdly, as the school was regarded as a fairly 'successful' and high performing school amongst the coloured population in that period, it was not unexpected that most students would be fairly successful in whatever occupations or jobs they were located in. Fourthly, students that exited the school under apartheid were generally steered into particular occupations, mostly teaching. Thus, it was to be expected if most past students were teachers or working in similar kinds of service occupations.

I found halfway through the project that four of the interviewees were just too difficult to interview and offered very little information to make for meaningful narratives. Similarly, more than halfway through two further participants felt that they could not do justice to the project, given their work and family situations and therefore withdrew. None of the data collected from these six participants were used in the study. In the end the main arguments in the study were framed around the narratives of only fourteen (eight male, six female) student participants.

The study further secured the assistance of four teachers (three males and one female) that had previously worked at Victoria High. They were all senior teachers that had worked at the school for at least ten years, some even serving as principal at some point. Notably, one of the teachers Mr Benjamin Walters was both a student and teacher at the school. These participants helped enormously in filling in the gaps that the lack of documents had exposed, as well as providing interesting insights into the school cultures and philosophy while they were there. Therefore, the total number of participants for this study was fourteen students and four teachers as detailed in Table 1.



Table 1: Details of the study participants

<b>Study Participants: Students</b>	<b>Years at Victoria High</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Eventual occupation</b>
1.	1964-1968	Abigail Potgieter	Primary school teacher
2.	1967-1971	Athol Williams	High school teacher
3.	1969-1973	Patricia Bruce	University lecturer
4.	1970-1974	Susan Plath	University music lecturer
5.	1971-1975	George Reynolds	Lecturer
6.	1973-1977	Cheryl Morkel	Teacher
7.	1975-1979	Henry Cupido	Electrician
8.	1976-1980	Denford Christie	Artist and designer
9.	1977-1981	Noor Adams	Lecturer
10.	1978-1982	Mikaeel Mathews	Educational psychologist
11.	1979-1983	Don Wallace	Cape Town City Council
12.	1981-1985	Roland Erasmus	Priest
13.	1984-1988	Naeema Josephs	Lecturer
14.	1985-1989	Nadia Adams	Lawyer

<b>Study Participants: Teachers</b>	<b>Years at Victoria</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Eventual occupation</b>
1.	1980s-2010	Mr Geoffrey Swartz	Teacher/principal
2.	1980s-1990s	Mr September	Teacher/principal
3.	1960s/1970s-1990s	Mr Benjamin Walters	Teacher( was also a student at the school in the 1960s-1970s and came back to teach at the school until the 1990s)
4.	1988-1990	Ms Tiffany Daniels	Teacher

In relation to the above table, the fourteen students comprised of nine males and five females, along with three males and one female teacher. All were classified as coloured under apartheid. Importantly, while the school was designed to only serve coloured students under apartheid, the nature of the school and its approach to issues of racial classification led to it enrolling many students that would otherwise have been sent to Indian or African schools. This approach to enrolments under apartheid was also due to the quite fluid and ambiguous nature of coloured identity in Cape Town at that time, with students often having parents classified differently (as Indian, coloured, white, African or foreign national).



Of the fourteen student participants, three of the students had one parent that was classified as Indian, one had a parent that was classified as white, another a father that was classified as African, and nine had both parents classified as coloured (with each of their parents differently classified in previous eras).

Each of the students came from different residential neighbourhoods during their enrolment at Victoria High, with some living close to the school (before the area was designated as a white area and their families were moved out), some living in accessible proximities due to bus and train routes, while others lived in areas where they either had to get car lifts to school, or take two trains and a bus to get there. Most students used a combination of modes of transport to get to school (walking, cycling, bus, car, train), with the majority living more than fifteen minutes driving time (and an hour walking time) away. Students incurred the inconvenience of this daily travel due to the belief that attending Victoria High would make a meaningful difference in their lives and propel them onto a different pathway in life; whether that meant proceeding on to institutions of higher learning, securing ways of thinking that led to reputable or secure white collar positions and professions, or getting into a space where they were empowered into decent, liveable existences.

The students were at Victoria High at different times over two decades in the period 1968 to 1990. One of the students attended the school in the last two years of the 1960s decade, six of them matriculated in the 1970s, while seven students matriculated in the 1980s. One of the teachers was at the school in the late 1960s as a student. His two children also attended the school in the 1980s. All four teachers that were interviewed in the study taught at Victoria High School in the 1980s.

#### **4.7. THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

In terms of process, all study participants were provided with consent and agreement forms and informed about the nature and consequences of the research once they agreed to take part. They were told that just as they had voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, they could also withdraw from the study at any stage (Christians, 2005:144). In light of different personal values and priorities, each of the participants were given a period of time to weigh things up and digest the information they were given.

Once on board, participants were provided with a list of research of broad research questions that would be used to steer the multiple interviews with each of them. A roster was then drawn up for a period of six months to start off processes with each of the participants, with an interview schedule developed for multiple interviews with each participant over a twelve-month period. Participants lived across the length and breadth of Cape Town, with two participants living on farms in rural Western Cape. The main device used to work with all the participants was to develop a sense of familiarity, common understanding, and agreement with each of them. Caution was taken however to organise the rapport created with participants to prevent becoming too close and too familiar with them, as this could have distorted the meaning making processes in the interviews.

Much attention was given to introducing the study and the goal of the project, as well as clarifying their pivotal roles in making the study a success. It was agreed that no questions would be asked that could cause them any hurt or pain and that the main focus would be on how Victoria High influenced their learning and lives. All interviews were conducted in English.

Cole & Knowles (2001:39) observe that in studies where life histories provide the primary data, participants need to be given access to all of their interview transcripts as well as the initial drafts of their life history narratives. This is to ensure that the subsequent analysis and interpretation is defensible and verifiable. This process was particularly useful in the study as it also made the researcher reconsider key impressions and understandings and develop the narratives in a collaborative way with the participants (Cole, 1991:191, 203).

## **4.8. THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

### **4.8.1. Transcriptions**

Transcriptions were all completed subsequent to each interview. This enabled the identification of key gaps, in order to amend the interview schedules for subsequent interviews. Transcriptions were slow, time-consuming, and very taxing but personally doing them added value that was immeasurable. It was during these hours of listening over and over to the various tapes that the individual narratives took their initial shape and form, and it was in this process that the main themes from the collected data, emerged.

It was also during the transcription process that it became clear that the study would benefit from a theme-based focus and analysis rather than one that laid out the various life histories side by side as a way of linking learning to life developments (Patton, cited in Merriam, 2009). Key themes were pulled out, bracketed, analysed, and then compared across the life history narratives to identify the main common threads in relation to the school and its influence on the lives and thinking of the participants.

#### **4.8.2. Coding**

Once the emerging themes were identified and organised, they were then all coded according to 'salient themes', recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that linked people and settings together. O'Connor and Gibson (2003:69) assert that "sometimes we can learn about a person's perceptions, attitudes, and feelings about something simply by noticing the words they use to express themselves". Once the main ideas and phrases were highlighted these were linked to the study's main research questions in order to analyse the data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) offer the following outline by which to analyse data, namely:

1. Familiarise yourself with your data: Transcribe the data (if necessary), read and re-read the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generate initial codes: Code interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire dataset, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Search for themes: Collate codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Review themes: Check if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire dataset (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Define and name themes: On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

#### **4.8.3. Analysis and interpretation**

Analysis is an iterative process that comprises of a variety of things, namely the utilisation of theory, data collection, analysis and interpretation. It also requires a sense of orderliness and consistency. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that the first process should include

identifying 'outliers' in the data, which can be immediately discarded when they don't fit into the main patterns and themes of the bigger project. The second process comprises of highlighting the main themes in the data, tied to key issues raised in the study. For this dissertation these included themes such as race, social class, identity formation, gender, student aspirations, learning, pedagogical practices, life transitions, and historical context and social change.

#### **4.8.4. Researcher Positionality**

A key challenge in the study was that as a Zimbabwean citizen I was an outsider to the key national debates and the effects of apartheid on the lives of the participants. I did not go to school in South Africa, and thus did not experience education and schooling under apartheid. This lack of insider knowledge provided a variety of limitations for the study. It also partly contributed to the conceptual positioning of the study based on learning and meaning-making rather than a more historical analysis.

On the other hand, my outsider status assisted me to gain access to the participants that may otherwise not have been possible. Participants tended to share intimate views and thinking with me as an outsider and, in turn, they perceived me as having a more open mind when listening to them.

For the study, I relied heavily on my student colleagues and supervisor to help me make sense of things that were said and outlined in my fieldwork and interviews. As such, the analysis in the dissertation was bound up and understood through a three-way process (interviewer - me, interviewee - participants, and objective colleagues - other PhD students) instead of the normal two-way interviewer-interviewee process.

Interestingly, in doing this research I was fascinated to observe that the schooling experiences of these students were similar to my primary schooling experiences in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Like Victoria High, my primary school teachers underscored the significance of hard work, self-worth, commitment, ingenuity, critical thinking, autonomy and agency to overcome odds. The academic excellence and discipline that my school espoused attracted many students from both poor and rich families to enrol at the school irrespective of it being overcrowded. Since there were no sufficient rooms to accommodate all classes at the same time, the school innovatively divided the students into two groups. The first group used the school facilities in

the morning from 7 to 12pm and the second from 12:10pm to 5:10pm. It is this type of example of my context that I observed as a similarity at Victoria High school as well as the school's educational commitments that attracted me to do the study based on students who attended the school.

#### **4.9. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has provided and described the methodology and ethical principles that governed the research project and its approach. It outlined the processes that could not be readily undertaken without giving consideration to the historical context of Victoria High and the thinking, meaning-making, attitudes, and backgrounds of the study participants. The chapter showed how these, alongside the contribution and input of the researcher, informed and shaped the study and subsequent decisions and positions taken with regard to its research methodology and focus.

The chapters that follow take up the challenge of analysing the links between Victoria High and the thinking, meaning-making, attitudes and dispositions, and backgrounds of the study participants. It is in these chapters that the student standpoints on crucial abstractions and characterisations in the study are given form and understanding. In that regard, chapter 4 has sought to contextualise and provide meaning for the variety of motivations and decisions taken in the study, as well as provide a description of the main thoughts and actions that resulted in the kinds of interpretation and applications of knowledge that were adopted.

## CHAPTER 5: MEMORIES OF SCHOOLING: VICTORIA HIGH AND ITS STUDENTS

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

Schools are complex and dynamic systems that influence the academic, affective, social, and behavioural learning of students, as well as their thinking and future opportunities. Through good schooling practices, both inside the classroom and across the school, learning opportunities and development chances are generated in ways that, it is hoped, contribute towards meaningful and satisfying adult lives (Cric, Green, Barr, Shafr & Peng, 2013; Gu & Johansson, 2013).

Schools are also generative sites of particular cultural and social dispositions where, according to Bourdieu (1971:192-193), “individuals come to own sets of basic, deeply interiorised, master patterns”. These patterns powerfully shape the consciousness and thinking of individual students, and authenticate particular values and ways of seeing the world through architectures, cultural symbols, symbolic artefacts, social outlooks, dominant languages, preferred behaviours, and the kinds of conversations and treatments that everyone in the schools engage in. Schools leave deep imprints on student lives by creating abiding and unforgettable set of memories that, combined with their individual backgrounds, political contexts and personal cultures, produce quite different trajectories for each individual student (Ortner, 2003:105).

It is furthermore at schools where students develop more refined self-concepts, personal values, interests and career goals (Kaplan & Flum, 2009), and which provide the context and required social interaction necessary for individuals to explore their individual identity formations (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010:77). More importantly, it is at school where learning gets “cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) transformed and integrated into each individual person’s biography” (Jarvis, 2009:25).

Notably, schools co-construct student identities through different histories and processes. These histories and processes include how the school was established, who it was meant to serve, and how it developed admissions policies, learner tracking systems, disciplinary policies, institutional rules, teacher-student interactions, as well as preferred official and unofficial texts used within the school. It is these pervading school cultures that have led to

students internalising the ‘rules of the game’, ‘ways of being’, and how to negotiate meaning within the school context (Dawson, 2003; Tabak & Baumgartner, 2004).

As such, this chapter specifically explores the connections between Victoria High and fourteen of its past students, as well as the powerful ways in which the structure and history of the school intersected with and shaped the lives of these different students in the period 1968-1990. Employing the depictions of Soudien (2007) and Berkhout (2008) of schools under apartheid, the chapter examines how Victoria High both ‘externally’ mirrored the ways in which students were categorised and classified under apartheid and ‘internally’ reproduced different kinds of expectations and criteria in its students that together shaped the ways in which they thought about themselves, their associations with others, and their futures. As Soudien (2007:34) notes, it is at schools like Victoria High where “students got abstract knowledges of reasoning, social knowledge of how to develop relationships, practical knowledge of how to do things, personal knowledge about what and who they were, and the general knowledge of what they needed to navigate their everyday lives”.

The chapter utilises the insights and views of the fourteen past students and four teachers to illuminate the history and culture of the school in the period 1968-1990. As the backgrounds and aspirations of the students that the school served and the areas where they lived, are key dimensions of the school’s history, the chapter shows how the philosophy of Victoria High and its broader engagement with local stakeholders played a significant role in influencing and inducing the students to consider quite different life perspectives and trajectories to those they might have followed given their engagement in a different school context. The chapter further serves to introduce the reader to the fourteen past students and 4 teachers and addresses the dissertation’s first research question.

## **5.2. UNLOCKING THE LIVES OF STUDENTS**

In the study, the backgrounds of the fourteen student participants were all very different in terms of gender, age, ideology, social class status, understandings of race, geographical location, historical and political points of view, the period that they were at the school, their academic orientations, sporting interests, aspirations, what they took away with them into their future lives, and who they eventually became. The participants attended Victoria High

at distinct historical and political moments that framed their schooling experiences and behaviours in quite different ways.

For example, Benjamin Walters grew up as a young child in the 1950s at a time when the effects of regime change had not fully impacted on the everyday political experiences of Cape Town residents. He lived and grew up in an area that would later be designated as a whites-only area, and was able to walk to school and access local amenities such as libraries and parks that were not available to subsequent Victoria High students. With the promulgation of the Coloured Affairs Act of 1960 and the beginning of Group Areas Act implementation, Benjamin's family was forced to move to an area much further away that was specially designed for coloured families. According to Benjamin this move changed the way in which he viewed his everyday surroundings, his outlook on life, and the ways he subsequently travelled and interacted with those around him. Field (2001) observes in this regard that the Group Areas Act of 1950 often had the dual effect of both generating strong feelings of resentment (about eviction) and an awakening of political consciousness about the need to fight oppression.

The period of the 1950s and 1960s, was characterised by the emergence of quite diverse political and labour organisations in opposition to apartheid. The adoption of the Freedom Charter, resistance to the pass laws, the Sharpeville massacre, and the effects of the Rivonia trial all played quite fundamental roles in shaping how South Africans saw themselves and went about their lives. Grievances about job reservation, housing, and the lack of welfare and other social provisions also led to further conflict with the apartheid state and the mass detention and imprisonment of large numbers of protesters (Kallaway, 2002).

This situation transformed in the 1970s to greater attention being focused on issues of poverty and massive inequities in different political, social, and economic spaces. This was tied to the onset of a serious economic recession in South Africa, leading to significant food and other shortages, organisation of factory and other workers, and numerous worker strikes. The 1970s was also characterised by the Soweto uprisings, the formation of strong student organisations and committees, and an organised apartheid state strategy across a variety of arenas to quell opposition (Kallaway, 2002).

The 1980s followed with more student boycotts, but also the establishment of a Tricameral parliament as an attempt to appease the coloured and Indian population. This was met by



the emergence of the United Democratic Front and other internal anti-apartheid resistance formations that fuelled a period of more forthright resistance in a variety of areas across South Africa (Molteno, 1987). What made the 1980s different was that it was typified by a dual apartheid strategy of appeasement and political oppression - violent engagement via three states of emergencies as well as a slow relaxation of job and other reservations and greater access to amenities and public spaces that had for decades been prohibited for most South Africans (Molteno, 1987; Kallaway, 2002).

In this respect, historical and political developments tied to different events and processes in Cape Town during apartheid connected in quite direct ways with the lives of Victoria High students, distinctly shaping their subsequent thinking and perspectives. These standpoints were further shaped by a history of resistance associated with schools like Victoria High and their established struggles (from inception) against segregationist thinking and colonial racism. Indeed, for the students of Victoria High, from its onset, the history of the school played a quite powerful role in giving meaning to the lives of a variety of different students

### **5.3. OPENING THE DOORS OF LEARNING: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF VICTORIA HIGH**

At the more local level, the establishment of Victoria High in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was driven by strong political and community motivation. At the time that it was established local residents, teachers, and parents in the area who complained to the provincial government that the needs of their children and that of their communities were not been adequately addressed. They voiced concern that children in the area were only able to attend school up to Grade 7 and thus lobbied for the building of a high school. Church-based mission and mosque schools in the area battled to even provide schooling up to Grade 7 at that time.

During this period in the history of Cape Town it was the churches (and Muslim communities) that mainly provided schooling for students deemed to be of 'mixed race', with most churches not having the resources to provide proper or adequate schooling for most of the students they enrolled (Adhikari, 1994:118). Indeed, the demand from parents and local teachers for the building of Victoria High led to a number of other protests about racial and educational disparity in Cape Town, with teachers across the city accusing the provincial government of treating them differently to teachers that served students in government schools. They

asserted that the provincial government was deliberately burdening them (as teachers in mission schools) with having to collect school fees and having regular church bazaars, concerts and fetes to fund their schools, while teachers in government schools with mostly white students were not burdened with these responsibilities (Adhikari, 1994). Many teachers in mission schools also often contributed some of their meagre salaries to help provide for the needs of their students.

The provincial government's immediate response to the demand for a high school in the area around Victoria Road was to attempt to have the area to be declared a whites-only area. This was at a time where the Group Areas Act had not been formally thought about, let alone written. The main concern was that there would be more calls for government schooling for children of 'mixed race', which was something that many officials were opposed to. Instead of heeding the calls and protests, the provincial government thus went to great lengths to obstruct the local initiative.

At the time, the actions, protests, and support of a large number of teachers that belonged to the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA) and the African Peoples' Organisation (APO) across the Western Cape put enormous pressure on the provincial government to take the demands for a high school more seriously (Adhikari, 1994). While the provincial government initially resorted to banning teachers who were supporting the protests, or transferring them to other schools and communities, when it saw the level of solidarity amongst parents and teachers as well as their growing political and social consciousness, it decided to rather endorse the establishment of Victoria High.

This did not however prevent the provincial government from working behind the scenes to try and close down the school. One of its 'solutions' was to try and provide more government schools in areas further away and to forcibly remove local residents to areas around those schools. It was felt that when schooling numbers dwindled at Victoria High the school would be closed down. However, despite most students later being forced out of the area and thus having to travel great distances to get to school on a daily basis, this simply strengthened the resolve of everyone tied to Victoria High to ensure that the school continued its educational endeavours. This led to a sense of opposition where students across Cape Town who wanted to study further than Grade 7 were encouraged to enrol at the school. This led to the school developing an even more dispersed and diverse student population base than was originally

associated with the school (Adhikari, 1994); with a student body comprising of those that would later become more formally designated as African, Indian, and white students.

Indeed, in subsequent years, it was this initial dispersed student body that came to inform the school's main ethos of non-racialism and contributed to an increased politicisation within the school against the growing racial politics of South Africa (and particularly Cape Town). A key dimension of the later teaching and learning activities of the school was that both teachers and students often actively resisted the variety of provincial government controls and pronouncements. They mainly did this through what was taught and learnt at the school and how it was presented and captured. As a result a great many teachers were either severely sanctioned or forced out of teaching.

These developments within the school in the early years encouraged teachers to prioritise teaching a 'worthy education' and develop a pedagogically-sound curriculum. The focus was on nurturing thinking and critically-minded people that opposed oppressive regimes and that better understood and were connected to the world around them; with the ultimate goal being active students who were aware of their rights and were willing to fight for them (Wieder, 2001:158-159).

Mr Swartz, a retired former teacher and principal of the school, noted:

*Victoria High School has a long history of opposition, with the baton of resistance handed down through the decades, with education used as a weapon against the authorities to undermine their attempts to control the minds of Capetonians through segregatory structures. The school armed students with the skills to deconstruct texts, to be enquiring and critically aware of social conditions around them, and to voice their opposition. From its inception learning was couched in a language that was built on precepts of human equality, non-racism, non-sexism and non-sectarianism. Teachers at the school were not scared to stand up for their beliefs, even when it meant disagreeing with fellow apartheid resisters.*

This oppositional thinking was further evident in the school appointing the first female school principal in South Africa in the 1950s. As part of a community of teachers dedicated to independent thinking and a focus on learning for the good of society, the female principal oversaw a period in the school's history where many teachers were arrested and jailed for

their community and political work. Nonetheless, she was able to nurture a school ethos that came to prioritise “quality education for all, strong work ethics, academic excellence, critical thinking and decision-making and developing respectful, informed and responsible future citizens” (School Memo).

#### 5.4 IMPARTING PARTICULAR SCHOOL CULTURES AND VALUES

Abigail, a retired teacher, attests to the above, noting that the main thing that Victoria High imparted to her was the nature of the school’s politics and the need to always fight for social justice. The school, she observed, taught her that “*politics was a religion*”.

Abigail grew up in a working-class family in the early years of apartheid. Her parents lacked adequate funding to send all of their four children to school and so had to make a choice about who attended school and who didn’t. Given this responsibility, Abigail took schooling very seriously. She excelled at primary school, but it was really at Victoria High where she blossomed. With her introduction to political thinking her life changed immeasurably. It was at high school where Abigail developed ways of thinking anew about the world and the different ways that she could possibly influence it. When she exited school she attended Hewat Teachers Training College and qualified as a teacher. She later married a teacher who taught at Victoria High and who was politically active. Due to their combined teacher activism, they had to eventually leave South Africa and take exile in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and only returned to South Africa after 1994.

This, according to Abigail, was not however an uncommon or isolated experience. Instead, she noted that the infectious nature of the political philosophies of resistance at that time was such that many students from other areas and other countries in the Southern African region followed similar paths. Abigail observed that:

*Students from Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia used to come down to established Cape Town schools like Victoria High so that they could pick up progressive lessons from their teachers. They then went back to their own areas and countries and tried to teach the same things there. Even the first prime minister of Zimbabwe got his O-levels in Southern Rhodesia and then came down to Fort Hare University in the Eastern Cape where he learnt his main politics. He joined a society of young African*

*Unity Movement people who taught him - that is where he got his progressive ideas from. At heart, if you are allowed to still say this, in his early years of office, he was a declared socialist. Many teachers in different countries took similar paths and sometimes had to leave and go into exile to remain true to their beliefs.*

The impact of this, Abigail recounted, did not go unnoticed on the apartheid government, and they actively attempted to prevent teachers at certain Cape Town schools from influencing their students:

*The government realised that a lot of youngsters coming out of certain Cape Town schools were communists. So they had to put a stop to that. So then what did they do? They brought the schools together as government schools, building one in Elsies River, one in Vasco, one in Bellville, one in Athlone, etc. They built more secondary schools so that the effects of the major schools were no longer as strong, with teachers in other, newer schools not having the same political outlook as teachers from the other established political schools.*

Abigail explained that the progressive and political teachings at many Cape Town schools originated in the philosophies of the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) which, as Adhikari (1994) notes, propagated strong anti-government stances from the 1940s. Its approaches coincided with the growing influence of the Non-European Unity Movement on the leadership of the TLSA at the time (Chisholm, 1991) as well as on the thinking of a large number of Cape Town teachers. In this respect, much of what happened at Victoria High from its inception through to the 1960s was firmly shaped by developments associated with the TLSA and its political and ideological philosophies.

Mr September, a teacher at the school in the 1980s, explained:

*Even in the 1980s, the school continued to hold onto this unique culture of learning – which was given substance by members of staff that firmly believed in the principles of the TLSA, especially its focus on getting all teachers to always work hard. The motto of the TLSA was always “Let us Live for Our Children” and that is what drove teachers at our school. The TLSA issued quite a bit of literature throughout the years to motivate the teachers to do their best for all Cape Town’s children and the school was blessed with a lot of such thinking. Every new teacher that came in had to slot into that kind*

*of thinking. It's an ethos that remains with the school, passed onto each principal or teacher that comes in. Teachers are reminded that whatever happens at the school, they have to take responsibility for that.*

Mr September further noted that even in instances where teachers embraced alternative ideologies such as that of the Black consciousness Movement (BC) or the African National Congress (ANC) or the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), teachers would engage each other in serious debate, dispute and disagreement in the staffroom. Their differences were not permitted to leave the staffroom. .

As such, as observed by Mr September, teachers went to great lengths to always focus on good quality teaching:

*You see there were people with quite different philosophies and ideas over the years. There were lots of arguments, fierce arguments, and lots of serious disagreements, especially in the struggle years between 1976 and 1985. The political debates of that period were very powerful and caused many splits. But we all agreed on one thing: when we leave the staffroom and go back to class we focus on work. So you could not say I am cross with that one, so I don't work, I am just going to sit back. No, you don't punish the child. So you disagreed in the staffroom and left it there.*

The historical approach of Victoria High, according to Mr September, was to teach the prescribed syllabus to ensure that students could 'perform' in relation to what authorities expected, but always to critically engage with it in ways that 'took the nation back to school', that 'removed the blinkers and prejudices' that led to the 'artificial separation of people', and that taught students that "all people belonged to one human family and are all of the same quality" (Hugo, 1978:416).

Miss Daniels, a politically-active teacher that was detained in the late 1980s because of her activism, described how a colleague approached teaching English at the school:

*She would say, let's do what we are supposed to do and then move on to the real business of learning. You know she taught what was in the curriculum and always moved way beyond the syllabus. She would take books and read but always made time to get to the real education. She always went beyond what was prescribed.*

Miss Daniels observed that this kind of professional attitude to teaching was often passed down family generations. Personally, she was always reminded at home on the importance of both enjoying teaching and always critically engaging with what is taught. She observed that:

*I remember waking up in the middle of the night seeing and hearing my parents with other TLSA members in deep discussion not only on educational matters but other politics of the time – that was the nature of life then and what they all did as teachers.*

Miss Daniels explained that exposure to such conversations made her far more conscious of the inequities occasioned by apartheid and cultivated in her a yearning to contribute towards the eradication of all forms of injustice. She realised early on in her life about the important role that teachers could play in instigating change in society, and thus set her heart on teaching. For her it was important to teach at a school that fostered this kind of thinking, and where she was provided with the space to develop critical thinking amongst the students. For her tackling the curriculum in different ways held the potential to open students up to reason in order to prevent them from becoming ‘docile workers’.

Describing the curriculum of the 1980s, Miss Daniels reminded:

*The curriculum of the day was a Christian nationalist curriculum which did not give the students the opportunity to engage or think. The syllabus that was pushed on the students was gutter education that impeded their thinking. Personally as a teacher I always felt it was my duty to instil in the children the value of what it means to be equal and to understand themselves. That has always been my message. I built into my classroom and my day learning that catered for diversity. I had the attitude that every student in the school had the opportunity to share and to achieve and I made sure that I push them beyond the bars that were set. I told my students to work hard and go to UCT (University of Cape Town) and show them (apartheid state) that they know more than what people think they did. Though my students had no resources, I taught them to always do their best, to be resilient and to be confident.*

It was this kind of attitude that also informed Victoria High school’s strong promotion of an ethos of non-racialism, social equality, and non-sectarianism. Students were constantly encouraged to question the way in which people had been classified by the apartheid system

and were given the skills to overcome the potential inferiority complexes that apartheid sought to instil. In this regard, the school was not only concerned about contradicting various notions of race, social class, and religion but also sought to provide environments that allowed students to see themselves, their families, and their futures in different ways.

#### **5.4.1. Equality is more than skin deep**

Denford, an artist and designer, noted that attending Victoria High gave him a completely different perspective and understanding of race, given his complicated family history. Denford highlighted how his family was torn apart by apartheid and techniques such as the ‘pencil test’:

*My father’s mother was white and my father coloured. Via the pencil test my father was classified white but he refused this classification. My sister was also classified white but she accepted the white identity and later married an Afrikaner and went on to live in Johannesburg with a very different family and community. After that she stayed away from her family and came to Cape Town only periodically. We therefore grew up in very different spaces, with my father living on the Cape Flats.*

Denford revealed how difficult it was to grow up on the Cape Flats with a ‘fair skin’, with other boys refusing to play with him because he was ‘white’ and not being able to play with anyone else because he was classified coloured. He recounted that this approach impacted also on the primary school he attended:

*I lived close to two primary schools in my area of the Cape Flats, with the one catering for students that were ‘darker’, more working-class, spoke Afrikaans, and mostly had ‘kinky hair’, and the other catering for the more affluent, lighter skinned coloured communities that aspired to be English. The one was more open-minded about its students (well, it had no choice), while the other focused on providing for a particular kind of students, both bright and ‘proper looking’. It was common, for instance my cousin who was a bright student but who was rejected because she was dark-skinned. The principal had this perception of social class and race, I remember people – family members not allowed in because of background while he accepted some ‘darker-skinned’ coloureds when he found out that there were doctors or lawyers in their family*



*backgrounds. I think his view was that children from working-class backgrounds could not apply themselves.*

Denford's experience at Victoria High was diametrically opposite to what was expressed in the above quotation. At the school he was exposed to a view that valued all students equally and that focused on their humanity instead of what they looked like. He explained this in the following way:

*Yes, Victoria High was supposed to be a coloured school so it had more coloured students. But it also had other Indian, Muslim children, and also a handful of African children that came from areas like Langa and were bussed into the school. That was a big difference when I came to Victoria High. You know, under apartheid in the 1970s, we grew up and lived separately, with all coloured people living together; African people confined to locations and the white population all on their own, close to the mountain and privileged. There was very little interaction; you know people just didn't have the space to connect. At Victoria High, I started meeting other people who were outside my community, I was able to interact with so many other students in the school.*

Henry, an electrician, widower and father of two adult daughters, offered a similar account of a poor working-class background and a distinct history of racial classification. He revealed that:

*I was the last child, the baby in the home. We were seven in our family. It was a large coloured family but the cost of living wasn't so high that time and so families could afford to be big. In any case, children also worked as they grew older. My parents were manual labourers so things were not easy.*

Henry asserted, however, that his attachment to Victoria High changed both how he thought about his social class as well as his racial classification. He remarked that:

*At Victoria High we were taught to achieve. It gave you the fighting spirit no matter what the odds were – to fight and succeed in life. That was one of the essential things that you could see there. The teachers told us not to let apartheid keep us behind. Don't look at your skin colour. Put it at the back of your mind. Everyone has a chance in life. They can oppress you but they can't oppress your brain because what you have in your*

*brain no one can take it away from you. They always said at the end of the day your brain does not work in relation to your skin colour. Your brains work like anyone's brains. But it is what you do with your brain and how you push yourself forward that matters. It doesn't mean when you are black you cannot think as well as a white person. If you are willing to succeed it is entirely up to you and I think that principle came out across very strongly in the school under apartheid. Don't let obstacles stand in your way. There are times when you cannot go ahead but you will still achieve. It's a mind-set – success is mind over matter, with race a contrived hindrance used to hold you back.*

It was something that, according to Mr Walters, Victoria High always sought to actively oppose:

*The school had a creed. It always spoke about the dignity of all people, hard work, and dedicated work. The purpose was to get children to imbibe those values so that they could cooperate with one another. And that was critical at the time, because the ruling regime made it clear that people of colour were to be the drawers of water and the hewers of wood, in other words just doing manual work. But the school's creed stressed repeatedly that we all have human dignity that is subject to no other. And that creed was recited repeatedly within the school.*

#### **5.4.2. Equality is about belief and motivation**

Patricia, a professor of medicine at one of the local Cape Town universities, related how her positive experiences at Victoria High eventually changed her social class position, and how the School's ethos of social success infiltrated her family and their views of the world around them. She described a background where:

*Life was really tough for us. We are a family of six: four females and two males. My sister, Catherine, is the eldest, then Andrew, me, Martha, Josephine, with James the youngest. My father worked in a factory and didn't earn enough to support the family. He really struggled so my mother also worked. She did lots of extra things, like selling chickens, making and selling hats, and sewing. She did a lot of things to raise money for us to get education.*

According to Patricia her parents desire was not merely to get their children to attend school but to do the best that they could. As such, their aspiration became the source of motivation for their children, with each of them going on to professional careers. As a resource that challenged the limitations of various exclusions, their 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004) is what drove each of them:

*My parents didn't have much education, if they had standard six that was a lot. But they had a value for education, so they pushed us very hard, all of us in our family. We all studied, we all had the opportunity to study. This was very unusual for children from our area and for our poor social standing. Catherine is now a lecturer, my brother Andrew builds houses, Martha is a nurse, Josephine is a banker, James is a motor mechanic, and I work at a university.*

A key aspect of schooling at Victoria High was its focus on social success. For many at the school, education was unapologetically tied to a particular view of culture, refinement, and social class that could be best attained if students excelled at school and attended university. This was a worldwide message in that period, namely that social class was a 'ladder' that could be climbed via hard work, dedication, and deep commitment to educational attainment (Ortner, 2003; McCalman, 1993). Patricia noted:

*Many of the students in my class came from quite affluent backgrounds. There were three of us that came from a very poor area and the three of us were best friends. The three of us felt that children who came from more affluent backgrounds (in those days this was about having just a little money) looked down on us which we hated, especially on days when we had to come to school in civvies but didn't have nice clothes. I had to share clothes with all my sisters. I wore the same school shoes on school days and weekends. But the teachers told us just to keep our heads down and work hard. The three of us are still friends today – Malcolm is now an architect, Trichardt is a medical doctor, and I am a university professor. I think you could say we succeeded as well, if not more, than many of the other students.*

#### **5.4.3. Equality is about forbearance and peaceful human interaction**

George, currently a university lecturer, has an ambivalent attitude towards the values that were espoused at Victoria High. Reflecting that he was brought up in a devout Christian

working-class family, George explains that his mother's approach to life was always to pray for the success of her children, always hoping that through divine intervention their futures would be different to hers. She sent George and his brothers to Victoria High based on the school's reputation for helping students to proceed to university and become effective and valued members of society.

Once George enrolled at Victoria High, he was drawn to the non-sectarian ethos of the school, which changed his thinking and worldly outlook. He noted:

*I used to go to church with my mother and siblings. But when I joined Victoria High I was exposed to discussions where they questioned the existence of God, so I began to also question myself and what I was taught and doubting the validity of religion. I stopped going to church. It's only now after I divorced that I feel there is a gap in my life. I think there is a God and yes, I now occasionally go to church.*

A key aspect of Victoria High's ethos was to oppose the power and sway of religion, the dangers of which, it felt, was firmly espoused in Christian National Education. To challenge the comfort and respectability that religion was generally used for, "particularly for those that were denied social recognition ... or that were stuck in a spiral downward mobility" (Foner & Alba, 2008:362), the school adopted a non-denominational stance. The school projected a commitment to peaceful human interaction and religious tolerance and forbearance.

It can be argued that the above institutional dimensions came to provide a particular schooling experience for each student who enrolled at the school in the period 1968 to 1990. How the school approached social class, race, and religion meant something different for each student, yet it left each of them with a particular disposition once they exited the school.

In the sections below, the chapter now turns to how Victoria High operationalised many of its stances and dimensions, and also explores some of the consequences for these outlooks on many of its students. One key operational challenge lay in the school subjects that the school prioritised for different students and the kinds of academic streaming it employed to address the variety of student needs. In the period 1968 to 1990 Victoria High unapologetically streamed in relation to academic competence, believing that this addressed the different needs and capacities of students and gave them the best opportunity to succeed in their

future lives. This position, much like the non-sectarian standpoint, appealed to many students quite differently, as noted in the sections below.

### 5.5. STREAMING - ROADBLOCKS OR GREEN LIGHTS

Roland is currently a member of the Lutheran Church clergy. He explained that this was not necessarily by choice but rather due to circumstances occasioned by both his home background and Victoria High's academic streaming system. Roland explained that his main love had always been Art, which he felt was his main talent. However, it was not an interest, or a passion that he was allowed to explore during his schooling career. His mother was firmly opposed to him studying art, believing that there were no career prospects in that field in the 1980s and that the subject was associated with 'academically weaker students'. In support of this Victoria High identified Roland early on as one of its academically strong students and would not allow him to follow the Arts stream at the school. The teachers felt that he would get into university based on his academic abilities and being associated with Arts students would undermine this.

Ironically, once at university Roland changed from one field of study to another before finally 'dropping out', thereby failing to finish or obtain any academic qualification. Roland related that:

*I wasn't allowed to change classes at Victoria High. I tried but it didn't work. At Victoria High School standards 6 and 7 (Grades 8-9) were generally regarded as your orientation years, and then you specialised when you would went into standards 8-10 (Grade 10, 11 and 12) in terms of the subjects that you wanted to use as your career options. The school only had academic and general streaming – so it was difficult to get a customised solution once you got to higher grades- especially if you were doing well academically. I wasn't able to do Art and had to go to art school as extramural learning to follow this interest of mine. I used to do this on Saturdays. And then even though Victoria High had art as a subject, I couldn't even access the facilities because I was in the academic stream.*

Roland noted that this elitist approach to academic ability, while it may have been tied to social justice concerns at the time, was an aspect of the school's history that negatively impacted on a large number of students at the school:

*Victoria High School determined the careers of many students by limiting its subject options. When I look back now, if I were coming into architecture I would need to be able to do Art, Woodwork, Maths, Physics you know subjects that would have geared me towards an architectural career. But this I wasn't able to do. I did Maths and Physics, but not Art or Woodwork. In practice it limited my life possibilities.*

It could be argued however, that Roland has the benefit of hindsight to say the above, but that the structural limitations of the 1980s made the kinds of streaming that were prominent at the school at the time almost an inevitability.

#### **5.5.1. Nurturing individual talents**

As a shy, unassuming, and reserved female daughter of a struggling working-class family, Susan, a music lecturer and trainer, had no major aspirations or expectations when she attended Victoria High. Susan explained that:

*In standard six when we wrote an essay 'what do you want to become one day', I wrote that I wanted to become a music teacher, that I wanted to study at Hewat Training College, and that I wanted to get married and have children. You know, college was different from university, college was lower but that was all that I could see myself doing. I had these limitations because why would I think that I could conquer the world? I just didn't come from such a family and we lived under the state that did not allow us to think in any other way.*

Teachers at Victoria High however were very impressed with her quiet abilities and encouraged Susan to focus on excelling academically and proceeding to university. Recognising her keen talent in music, the school head and her music teacher called on her parents and advised them about her future prospects. They advised her parents to do whatever was possible to get her musical instruments for further practice. Such confidence, Susan attested, inspired her to want to study music. She explained that:

*My music teacher first told my parents that I needed a piano and that they should try to buy me a piano. Of course my parents didn't have that kind of money but they went*

*to look anyway. I was a kid and what did I know about what was a good piano or a bad piano. The salesman played this and that piano, all sounded good, but finally we took one that was within my parents' budget. Obviously they could not afford anything else. Anyway in standard seven (Grade 9) I began to just listen to music and through listening I got the sense of how pieces must sound. At that stage we had SABC radio and they had a programme where they played a lot of classical music. I was always tuned in to it. I got the sense of how music must be played – how bass must be played or how the romantic pieces must be played- just through listening to the radio, not my teacher telling me how to play.*

Susan relayed that it was her music teacher that planted the seeds of hope that enabled her to develop her talents and that sharpened her imagination. This culminated in her leading a life that she had not anticipated early on in her school career. Her example further illustrated the varying foci of Victoria High in the period 1968 to 1990, a foci that also included a variety of sporting and recreational activities.

#### **5.5.2. Learning through recreation**

Noor, a university lecturer, reminded that different students require different kinds of schooling stimuli in order to succeed. Given that he did not do well academically at school, it required another form of inspiration to get Noor to eventually find his 'niche'. With a political awareness nurtured in his family home (his uncle was killed by the apartheid police), Noor took a long time to realise what he was good at. In that respect, he benefited from the broader curriculum and recreations offered at Victoria High.

In attending Victoria High, like so many other students, Noor participated actively in many of the sporting codes offered at the school. He enjoyed playing chess but this was not a major sport in the school and attracted little interest from the overall schooling body. He also enjoyed participating in the school's recreational activities:

*I always remember Valentine's Day – when we would have stage shows, singing, and students reading out cards on a makeshift stage in the quad- as well as sport days when everybody would gather and join to watch our sportspeople. I liked sports and looked forward to playing rugby and cricket in the afternoon at the school. The school also had cross country races where students would follow a track run through the*

*surrounding neighbourhood and where others like myself would wait for the winners to come in. Sports days were always exciting events at Victoria High and got everyone involved and excited. It was less about the sports and more about coming together and respecting the excellence of our fellow students.*

This, according to Noor, gave a different flavour to the school and removed the monotony of classroom humdrum and what he described as the boring preoccupation on content knowledge. It gave different kinds of students the opportunity to shine and show what they were good at, whether that be the acting genius of some students, the volleyball brilliance of certain individuals, or the singing prowess of a few. Noor related his boredom with schooling at the time:

*The school was a comfortable zone and the most challenging thing for me was to how to conform to (academic) schooling in general. I found schooling extremely boring and felt schooling should be more than sitting in the classroom that staff needed to be more exciting. There were some of those kinds of teachers at the school but I mostly got the boring ones. When I met my English teacher recently, he reflected that he never thought I would achieve anything academically as Victoria High was too stifling for a student like myself. He reminded me about how he would chase me out of his class because I did not follow the rules. Seriously, I didn't think that I would one day become a university lecturer. School work was just too boring to think that.*

Yet, notwithstanding the positive ways in which the above activities were perceived, recreational and sporting activities at Victoria High were really always an afterthought. Under apartheid, schools for coloured, Indian, and African learners were under-resourced and did not have the kinds of fields, school halls, or music and drama rooms that made it possible for students to contemplate careers in any of these areas. Many schools had none of the above facilities and consequently were forced to prioritise academic learning if their students were to have any kind of future.

Mr Swartz, a retired teacher, explained that:

*The scarcity of resources – both material and human – led to teaching becoming more and more challenging as the years went by. While the school facilities were slowly upgraded, we functioned for most of the school's history without a hall and had*



*assemblies and school gatherings in the quad. Imagine assemblies with 800 students lined up in single lines, having to stand (or sit on their haunches when it was very hot) in long lines often in the rain. This limited the kinds of activities that the school could plan. Victoria High School also battled to foster sports such as soccer, rugby and cricket as a result of its lack of fields. Its small field could only be used for events like hockey and baseball and for general ball-kicking during intervals. Despite all these challenges the teachers never sat back, they worked hard to find ways to overcome the school's setbacks.*

## 5.6. WORKING WITH WHAT IS AVAILABLE

In the above respect, it is important to know more about the history of Victoria High and how its orientations were shaped by the structural possibilities of the school. Established near a dairy farm, the school not only started off with stables and tents transformed into limited classrooms, with no library or laboratories or other amenities; but this situation remained the norm for many decades.

As such, the abiding memory of the school for Mikaeel, an educational psychologist, was that “*you work with what is available for the benefit of the students*”. Mikaeel explained that:

*When we were at Victoria High School you would not talk about resources. We were taught in prefabs, which were extremely cold in winter, but not as cold as the block of brick buildings at the back of the stables. They were never built for schooling. But the thing is: Victoria High was more than its lack of resources. Yes, they didn't have a hall or sporting fields and a disadvantaged school. But resources alone don't change experiences. It is teachers who make the difference, those that mind you have a calling for the job and not those who want money.*

Depicting a scenario of a teacher organising teaching and learning around poor resources, and pulling out a class photo from her table drawer, Miss Daniels related an incident where she had to make do with what she had. The related incident took place in the late 1980s. She noted that:

*You see these prefabs here; we had about three of these. This is my Grade 8 class and their classroom. Inside this classroom was a hole, so I used to have a plank to act as a*

*carpet to cover the hole so that it would not be dangerous. These are the prefabs - and the conditions were never improved- they were just the conditions under which we had to teach. Yet despite these working conditions we implanted a sense of pride and agency in our students and parents and we were good at that. The main thing is that we inculcated pride in our students - that first and foremost they were human beings and that they had as much rights as anyone else. More so, we focused this on their futures and not their present so that they pursued what was possible and were not held back by the intolerable.*

It was this ability to make do with makeshift facilities and minimum resources that enhanced Victoria High's reputation within the community, coupled with its ability to turn a large number of students into potential university and further education candidates.

#### **5.7. SCHOOLS DEPEND ON REPUTATIONS TO SURVIVE**

Naeema, another university lecturer, reflected that she attended Victoria High based on its reputation for providing students with a good grounding in education. She also lived close to the school. Brought up in a family where her mother was a housewife and her father a teacher who valued quality education, Naeema was positioned from early age to attend a school that would transform her thinking, her future opportunities, and open up the way for an upwardly mobile lifestyle. Naeema asserted that Victoria High helped her specifically develop individual assertiveness, critical thinking, and a desire to have an effect on the lives of her community. She observed, however, that her home situations also played a crucial role in how she experienced learning at the school:

*I think it was in 1982 when I became more conscious of apartheid laws. It was, at a time where the Group Areas Act had already happened in most of my neighbourhood and most coloured families in my street had been moved out. A lot of my friends were moved out and we were the last coloured family in my street. With the area declared a whites-only area, all my friends, relatives, and neighbours were scattered across the peninsula. Later, I remember I was in standard 7 (Grade 9), we eventually followed and moved to Athlone. It meant I could not walk to school anymore and had to instead travel much longer distances every day. Even though there were other good schools close to my new house my father didn't want me to change schools because of the*

*reputation of Victoria High. He rather drove me to school every day (for 3-4 years) and made a huge sacrifice every day to ensure I got a better education.*

This was not uncommon. Mr September remarked that even after the proclamation of the Group Areas Act in the 1950s, many students continued to travel long distances to attend the school. This was based on the kind of education they presumed that they would get:

*Lots of parents were still prepared to send back their children to the school. They felt they would get quality education, and rather suffer the expense of the inconvenience. The school didn't bus anyone so students travelled by train, buses or their parents dropped them. One family brought their child from Paarl and the mother would wait in Cape Town. The child was one of our brighter pupils. This student was later involved in a car accident on his way home to Paarl and died together with his mother. Every year the school gives a shield to a student that is well behaved and performs academically to commemorate that boy who died in the 1980s. His example shows the sacrifice the people made to come to the school.*

Importantly, the school's reputation for excellence pushed students to work harder. This, tied with the commitment and diligence of teachers, led to many parents wanting to enrol their children at the school. This was, according to Mr Swartz, because:

*Victoria High School occupied a premier position as an educational institution at the time. The school's reputation often extended beyond provincial borders and beyond the borders of the country. It was a reputation that was richly earned as, despite its comparatively poor facilities, the school produced scores of students of outstanding calibre and maintained a level of education that well-resourced schools envied. The success rate of ex-students at institutions of higher learning speaks volumes about the school. At one point, the school was the sixth highest feeder to UCT (University of Cape Town). Fathers and mothers sent their children to Victoria High School for its academic structures, strategies, and policies that they believed would lead to greater social mobility.*

The school's reputation was mainly underpinned by its renowned teaching practices. It was well known that teachers were committed to social change, to students getting the best

learning they could get, and to learning being an exciting and different experience to that experienced at many other Cape Town schools.

## 5.8 A PEDAGOGY OF LEARNING

Embedded in Victoria High's teaching practices was a commitment to a variety of teaching methods and a focus on how critical thinking could be consistently fostered. Mr Walters described some of the school's pedagogical practices in the following way:

*The teaching had to be founded on the basis of building students, of using mathematics not merely to double with numbers but to get children to think. I taught English and History, and certainly those were critical subjects to get children to think. For me it wasn't merely teaching 'literature' for literature's sake'. It was about disaggregating the setting of the literature and the context of the story towards getting them to see a different world to what they imagined.*

Focusing on developing critical thinking and mastering the skill of analysis, Mr Walters noted that:

*What I wanted to stress was that it wasn't about education for the job market, it was about developing the potential of the children regardless of their circumstances. The formal curriculum did not allow for that so we taught in ways that called up a whole extension of developmental societies and activities to play a role in student learning.*

Likewise, Miss Daniels highlighted that:

*While I can't say that there was only this progressive approach, certainly there were teachers who pushed chalk and talk, or that used a traditionalist behaviourist approach or a kind of Marxist talk-listen approach, what I can say is that as a maths teacher I used all possible and relevant methods to assist the children to understand mathematical concepts. People always think that Victoria High had top students, but we had lots of students from challenging backgrounds and so for me, when I think of challenges, it was always how I could best assist the rich diversity of children that I taught. At the time that I taught at Victoria High we had a lot of flexibility to work differently with different students. I remain horrified that it can't be done with other schools.*

The school achieved this consistency in pedagogical style via particular inductions for new teachers and through structured and systematic leadership from various subject heads. Mr September observed that:

*We always had lots of subject meetings according to your area, like Geography. As a Geography panel you would meet on a regular basis, and also be provided with support from your subject advisors/inspectors. From these meetings and sessions teachers would take away what was positive and implement it. There are still regular subject meetings every week at the school, sessions where teachers are reminded about the main ethos and pedagogical style of the school.*

Such meetings, according to Mr September, updated and equipped subject teachers with a variety of methods to use when teaching, especially when difficult concepts needed to be illuminated and transferred. They were also useful for new staff members to help them to interpret the syllabus in ways that captured the ethos and thinking of the school, and to discuss how to cater for different student abilities. Mr September noted that:

*The school always had a batch of established and well-qualified teachers. They would then assist younger or new teachers to develop their curriculum and work out ways to accommodate the needs of different students. Given that Maths was compulsory at the school, teachers had to work together to best allocate students into higher or lower grade Maths classes and then work out who was best suited to teach different classes, based on which classes had the 'best' students and also classes that were rowdy or ill-disciplined that needed a more experienced or skilled teacher.*

In terms of teaching and learning, it was always hoped that the teachers' values of dedication, diligence, and commitment to work would filter into the school body and be distilled in the practices and thinking of students. In that respect Mr Walters proclaimed that:

*There was an outstanding spirit of hard work at the school. It was part of the work ethic of the school that you work hard and that work was not limited by time or by a prescribed timetable. It extended way beyond that. School continued beyond school hours without extra remuneration for teachers. Many teachers taught students at home as well and encouraged extra learning. At different times in its history the school*

*had many extended school days, Saturday classes and evening classes, providing transport when schools went beyond normal hours.*

## 5.9. CRITICAL THINKING AND REAL-LIFE CHALLENGES

Wallace, married and a father of two adult children – a son and a daughter, firmly attributes his current worldview to his upbringing and schooling. He asserts that the value of fighting for social justice and thinking critically thinking can normally be traced to the kinds of schooling experiences that students receive and their type of family background and social experience. Wallace revealed that:

*I have been staying in my current house since I was a little boy. The house belonged to my grandfather, with this being a coloured area before the Group Areas Act. When the area was declared white everybody was kicked out, all except us. There were 52 families including us that remained in the area and refused to move. We took the minister to court and we won the case. So this continues to be our family house many many decades later. Fighting for your rights in this way from young teaches you about your own value and what can happen when you stand up. It was something that made me a soccer star at Victoria High, and even though I didn't excel at school, I always knew my worth.*

Wallace argued that it was the different kinds of learning available at Victoria High, whether via the physical education, music, art, or maths teacher, that ultimately developed a desire in him to always think critically. His teachers taught him to question, to argue, and to never take things for granted. Wallace noted that this virtue is something he continues to cherish:

*I took away from the school the art of critical thinking. Up to today I am that kind of a person that you don't just tell me something. If you tell me something then I would ask you, why are you telling me this? Why are you saying that I must do this? I don't just accept things for what they are. And I have taken that into my life as a parent as well. I like my children to challenge me. I like my children to ask me, why did you do this? Why should we do that?*

Wallace argues that a critical disposition instils in people a sense of assertiveness, something that he believes all parents should carefully nurture in their children. In the latter regard he related the following:

*I remember when we were young when our parents disciplined us and you asked them, why are you doing this? They would give you a hard smack because asking showed that you were being rude, or you were insolent. But I don't see it like that. I was taught to question at Victoria High, that when you don't understand an instruction, you ask. That is what questioning is really about. When people understand they are in a better position to do what they are meant to do. So my message always is, 'don't be afraid to ask' and 'don't be afraid to challenge me'.*

#### **5.10. THE POWER OF SOCIAL NARRATIVES**

Nadia, a lawyer and married mother of four children, believes that her interest in social justice was influenced by her schooling experiences as well as her upbringing. She noted that her mother had a huge influence on her life, mainly through the stories of District Six she told and through the parable-like tales she shared. Nadia related how the pain on her mother's face and her aggrieved voice when she told these stories made her wonder why such injustices proliferated, making her want to work with others to stop such pain:

*Once, when I asked my mother why she didn't refuse being relocated by the Group Areas Act, she quietly replied in her very soft voice: "opposing is often like climbing an ant hill – people fear to risk their lives and you would have to climb over them". If you are okay with that, then you do. If you value them, you mostly don't.*

At Victoria High Nadia was exposed to literature and films that depicted people who had overcome oppression. She also found out about social injustice through the repressive state actions of the mid-1980s and the large numbers of students that suffered during the student boycotts. Nadia recounted that:

*I think I was prompted to study law to a large extent by the boycotts and uprisings at that time (1980s). I was a bit young but exposure to the ways law was misused to make apartheid work made me to question why we have unfair laws and why it allowed people to be treated the way they did under apartheid - that sort of guided me to*

*choose law as a profession. In discussions with teachers at Victoria High they helped me better understand the complexity of laws and the history that led to their promulgation. It was their deep understanding about things that were outside schooling that I most cherished.*

#### **5.11. LEARNING FROM LIFE AND GIVING BACK**

Cheryl, a teacher, has little doubt that her mother served as the abiding influence on her life and her thinking. Cheryl commented that painfully watching her parents struggle to make ends meet and do the best they could within their limited means, provided her with a most precious memory:

*My mother worked in a wholesale factory while my father had a trade behind his name. He was a motor mechanic. But they didn't earn much. My parents weren't very educated but the one thing they understood was that education was very important. So they really supported us as much as they could. Because we were poor we got bursaries to study further at universities but it was their support and giving their last that always makes me treasure what I have. My parents' support is what made us who we are. My elder brother is a lecturer at NMMU (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) and my younger brother I suppose is also a professional. He has a Masters degree in Sports Administration, focusing on drug testing in sports.*

Together with her parents' commitment to hard work, Cheryl was also swayed by her 'amazingly knowledgeable' teachers that were experts in their various subjects and served as her main role models. Cheryl noted that:

*My teachers were my role models in so many different ways. Most of my teachers were really hard working, even though some weren't very good when it came to teaching style and methodology. The main thing is that work that was handed in would always be marked. They had a strong work ethic and I think this was important to us as students at the school. We didn't have teachers being frequently absent from school. We didn't have teachers coming to class unprepared, the kinds of things you hear about today in schools. So many of them offered traits that helped to mould me as a student and as a person.*



Cheryl further asserted that:

*I think my teachers influenced me to become a teacher. It was almost like they inculcated in me, maybe it was just me because not everybody else became a teacher, a desire to be like them. When I graduated with my BA degree I always felt now I needed to plough back into my community because that was what was inculcated in me and I had to do this because I had been privileged to go to university. I had to plough back into my community. After graduating I went to work. My first job was working in a public library. I worked in a public library for four years and then I went to do a teaching diploma and then I went to teach at Victoria High. I was there for eleven years.*

In the end the different perspectives of students were shaped by what they each thought education should do in people's lives. While they each reached their understandings via a variety of life and schooling experiences, it was the educational and political terrain of school provision that ultimately shaped the ways in which they experienced their subsequent lives. To demonstrate this, the chapter returns to the influence of the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) on how schooling was approached at Victoria High in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, told via some brief insights from Athol.

## **5.12. NOTIONS OF SCHOOLING**

Athol, a retired educationist, revealed that his engagement with politics can be traced to his childhood but was enhanced by his interactions at Victoria High and its political stances. As with Denford, Athol's childhood was also torn apart by apartheid classification, with two of his brothers defined as white and two of them classified as coloured. This led to his family having a bird's eye view very early in life about the different opportunities that racial classifications afforded each of them. For Athol this filled him with intense resentment towards apartheid.

His mother's way of dealing with the matter was to send him to a Moravian primary school, hoping that he would later become a priest and thereby pacify his visible bitterness. However, when Athol subsequently attended Victoria High, these ideological and political stances were reinvigorated and his fury at the apartheid state returned. At the time Athol was particularly

drawn to the ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and its different views about social change. At the school these views were contrary to the dominant philosophy of TLSA which put Athol in direct tension with the teachers and other students. Athol was however quite unrepentant and continued to actively spread BCM ideologies in open opposition to other TLSA ideas. This led to constant reprimands, disagreements, and summonses to the school office which provided him with a particular experience of the Victoria High processes. When asked what he learnt from these experiences, Athol remarked in the following way:

*Obviously you don't take part in something for five years and don't take away something from it. Once a child has gone past through the gates of a school that child generally looks back at the school with pride, you know. But I think it's not different from what a child would take away from any other school. I had experiences at Victoria High that impacted enormously on me and that had an effect on the work that I had been doing. Importantly, Victoria High helped me to think seriously about life and about politics, although of course I had quite different views.*

Athol noted that his experiences at Victoria High had a particular effect on how he viewed learning thereafter and how students needed to always be accorded respect, decency, and utmost care. This changed the ways in which he would later come to address student needs and standpoints when he became a teacher. Athol reflected that:

*I fundamentally object to the quite uneducational ways that Victoria High school approached learning and critical thinking. The fact is that they didn't really focus on the needs of the individual child. They focused on the ethos of the school and if a child satisfied the needs of that ethos then that child shone at the school. Victoria High prioritised a particular kind of student and did not really focus on the potential of other students. This awakened in me those feelings that I had as a child where I became aware of oppression and struggled against it into my adult life. If there was no connection between the student and the ethos of the school that child was regarded as stupid, dysfunctional and not contributing to the school and those children were normally those that were not in the rigorous academic stream.*

This, Athol argued, disregarded the potential of so many students and ultimately defeated the purpose of providing education. This complex paradox is an issue that the dissertation returns to in later chapters.

### **5.13. CONCLUSION**

Chapter 5 has illustrated some of the history of the school, the traditions it underscored, and the different stances that the students took away with them into their future lives. These were told through the insights provided by the fourteen participants and four teachers, and remind the reader about the contingencies of historical moments and the challenges attached thereto. The chapter's main purpose was to show how knowledge was distributed at the school, how students were encouraged to position themselves and fight for social justice, and how students saw the school in relation to them becoming responsible and rational citizens.

The next chapter focuses on how student schooling experiences fed into their various identities and what they considered to be useful for their future lives.

## CHAPTER 6: SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES UNDER APARTHEID

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how schools are significant arenas that promote students to acquire transposable capital that enable them to make sense of their learning. It debates how schools are the interlocking parts that bring students together and influence how they negotiate the meaning they attach to their identities. It also presents an account of how schools are responsible for socialising groups of children and young people in specific skills and values in a society (Henslin, 1999). In this regard, Sleeter and Grant (1988:19) state that schools provide “an institutional ideology, socializing agents and an experiential context within which students define and shape the way they think about their personal dreams”. Furthermore, Appelbaum and Chambliss (1997:120) argue that schools as a “socializing agent probably contributes most to social conformity. The school system becomes the glue that holds society together”. Elucidating the primary role of schools, Saldana (2013:229 citing Counts, 1932) highlights how

faced with any difficult problem of life we set our minds at rest sooner or later by their appeal to the school. We are convinced that education is the one unfailing remedy for every ill to which man (sic) is subject, whether it is vice, crime, war, poverty, riches, injustice, racketeering, political corruption, race hatred, class conflict, or just plain original sin. We even speak glibly and often about the general reconstruction of society through the school.

Significantly, Counts’s perspectives of schools go beyond merely serving as institutions of social control (Foucault, 1979; Noguera, 1995) to emphasising them as instruments of social transformation. Similarly, Brameld (1957:196) perceives education as a “normative enterprise whose obligation is not only to help personalities come to terms with the dominant goals of their respective cultures, but to help them analyse, express, implement, and often reconstitute these goals as fully as they are able to and as comprehensively as they see fit”.

Schools are also potential vehicles that can contribute to change in society. Some schools can comply entirely with what is expected of them and do not question their functions and roles.

Such schools, as perceived by Bowles and Gintis (1976), follow the prescribed curriculum and produce passive and obedient students who will enter the world of work and accept authority without question motivated by external rewards. They integrate the students into the economic system through structural correspondence between their social relations and those of production. Their structures promote social relations that not only inure the students to the discipline of the workplace, but develop the types of personal demeanour, modes of self-presentation, self-image and social class identifications that are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy.

Contrary to schools that do not challenge the ideologies of the state as outlined by Bowles and Gintis (1976), Molteno (1987) demonstrates that some schools resisted and challenged apartheid. The students and teachers in some Cape Town schools were not automatically reproducing apartheid in unthinking ways. They actively and consciously made sense of what they were being subjected to. The schools provided their students with particular attitudes to underpin constructive world views, or reject and even alter adverse societal views. In this regard, Dewey (1916) highlights how some schools strive to foster and develop in students the skills, habits and attitudes necessary for them to solve a wide variety of problems and to think critically about the world around them.

Regardless of the position the school embraces, it endowed its students with transposable capital that influenced the thinking, knowledge, skills, individuality, self-concept, interpersonal relationship skills, emotions, attitudes, behaviour, careers and future prospects of students in particular ways. Highlighting the significance of schools in students' lives, Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses and Seekings (2010:203) contend that schooling is "an important socialising process that links what students are, hope for, and desire to be in their everyday lives to the kinds of identities and senses of well-being that they take away from their school experiences". Reiterating this, Ortner (2003:91) says, "high schools are social systems that attempt to force identities – to, as Foucault put it, 'pin people' to particular types and categories; or as Bourdieu put it, to create the conditions in which people ideally both inhabit these categories and are inhabited by them."

## **6.2. LEARNING CULTURES UNDER APARTHEID**

Numerous literatures (Christie & Collins, 1984; Hartshorne, 1992; Kallaway, 1984) depict how schooling in apartheid South Africa was based on inequality. Naicker (2000:1) demonstrates that,

apartheid education in South Africa promoted race, class, gender and ethnic divisions and emphasised separateness, rather than common citizenship and nationhood. The fiscal allocation in terms of race, where white education enjoyed more funding, resulted in wide-scale disparities with regard to all aspects of education. This included location of schools, quality and level of teacher training, resources at schools, support materials and almost every aspect of educational service delivery.

Furthermore, Christie and Collins (1979) outline that education policy and curriculum development in apartheid South Africa was used as an ideological state apparatus to promote the interests of the ruling apartheid government. The schooling for African students denied them human agency as they were given less demanding education to prepare them for menial labour. The learning they received discouraged them from being critical, assertive and creative.

In contrast to apartheid, which aimed to construct students as inferior and incapable, Victoria High developed students who understood that identity is a construction that can be struggled over. Through its culture of learning, the school encouraged teachers to be good role models, refute restricting racial discourses and advocate for non-racialism, non-sectarianism and no class segregation so as to rebuild the confidence and new forms of identities among its students, as expounded in the following sections.

## **6.3. ROLE MODELS AND EVERYDAY LIVING**

Some students do not consider their teachers as role models. Asmal and James (2002) attribute this to the teachers' poor qualifications, lack of confidence, inadequate preparations of lessons and general demoralisation to teach. On the other hand, students regard their teachers as role models when they are exemplary, knowledgeable, inspirational, considerate, tolerant and creative, (Lockwood, & Kunda, 1997).

Notably, at Victoria High some students highlighted that their teachers were good role models who displayed the value of learning, knowledge, diligence, commitment, assertiveness, pride, resilience, competition and teamwork. Demonstrating how some of the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm influenced him to become a teacher, Mikaeel noted:

*The quality of teachers that were at Victoria High for the period I was there, were amazing. The teachers engaged with the curriculum critically. We had a history teacher, Mr Oriento, he was such an animated character in the way he presented his lessons. Really he made history come alive. I loved history and went on to do my BA in History and Psychology. It was the way he put History across. It was not just about the great main theory. We learnt about Mao Tse-tung, Vietnam, etc. We learnt it in such a way that gave it a deeper understanding. The fact that I chose teaching as a profession aligned with the teacher ethics and understanding of the role that teachers had in formulating and impacting the lives of students.*

Likewise, George was encouraged to become a teacher because of the outstanding determination and optimism of some of the teachers. He explained:

*The teachers lived by example and you could take any of them and say I would like to be like that person. We had amazing teachers who were committed and they set very high standards. There was no such thing that if you get 50% you have passed and that's good enough. No! That was a disgrace. We were motivated to be clever and no one wanted to get less than 80% in the exams. Everybody wanted to get the top marks in the exams. The teachers' command of English was brilliant and you would like to be like them. There were a few bad teachers here and there, but most of them were good and credible people. We loved our teachers you know. If you speak to anybody who went to Victoria High, I am sure they will tell you that they were excited about the school. We learnt a lot.*

George further noted that he did not consider any other profession other than teaching because of the role that the teachers played in developing his thinking and patiently encouraging him on his educational journey.

Similarly, Roland explained:

*I valued my teachers. I think I took something out of each of them. I had a good physical education teacher when it came to rugby, he was a great supporter. He was a lower grade English teacher and I think very much in terms of value he was closer to the students and I think by virtue of being a physical education teacher, especially with boys because he was a good rugby player. He taught us to be tough, to handle those situations with limited resources, but then, certainly he was a role model to me. I think Mr Davids was another role model certainly, and not necessarily that I agreed with all his thinking, but certainly in terms of as a leader, he was one you could look up to. Mr Christopher was an Afrikaans teacher and had a unique teaching approach.*

Roland believed that the teachers differently impacted on his understanding of life and the handling of challenges, as well as the importance of setting up goals and determination to accomplish them irrespective of obstructions. He further pointed out how Ms Catharina, the music teacher became his role model through the passion she displayed in leading the school song. Her singing was inspiring and he described how the words of most of the songs still rang in his mind more than three decades after matriculating from school.

Naeema also outlined that the passion and expertise of the teachers motivated her to decide to become a teacher. She observed;

*I knew I had two professions; the one was journalism and the other teaching. Teaching was motivated by my teachers. There were many teachers and they explained their subject content well. I remember my Grade 8 English teacher. You know, I have never found a high school teacher who reads to the class. She would read the introduction of a book in class with great passion and taught us good expression. She really influenced my life. She developed my reading interest. Personally, I love reading and I read a lot. English became my best subject. English became my passion. Mr Swartz who also later became the principal taught me English. From him, I first began to have the thought that I wanted to become a teacher. My social studies teacher in Grade 8 and Maths teacher also were very knowledgeable of their subject content and they taught with passion.*

Noor considered his teachers as role models as they raised his political consciousness and desire to exercise social justice. He explained:



*My role models were Mr Davids, the vice-principal, and Emmanuel, because they fought for justice you see. There were people who really stood up for social justice. I also admired the Maji brothers; they were role models because they were people of high calibre who you could admire. They were at Victoria High and one of them was good to become a Springbok cricket player, but he then said he would not go because of the politics he learnt at Victoria High. They advised him not to play normal sports in an abnormal society. The SACOS (South African Council of Sport) had a policy: no normal sport in an abnormal society. In other words, how can I go and play sport with a so-called white guy and when I go home I must go to the townships and he goes to Bishops Court, it doesn't make sense. How can I play with him? I had the honour of being with the gentleman who won chess championships, but he had to take his trophy from the parking bay because he could not go into the building because it was for whites only. He won the trophy, but had to get it in the parking bay because the place said 'whites only'.*

The students' narrations depict the importance of teachers' influence on the students' lives. Freire (1996) perceives teachers as being capable of influencing the lives of students when they display a life beyond reproach; having authority but not being authoritarian; intervening in order to help students to reflect on aspects of their cultural, social and gender constructs; and to think critically. Similarly, Rugut and Osman (2013) suggest that teachers must be ready to lead by example, which calls for continued personal reflection.

The students have illustrated how the teachers were good role models that 'walked the walk', displaying various virtues such as, excellence, moderation, perseverance, reliability, respect, responsibility, self-control, sincerity, honesty, integrity, commitment, diligence, dignity, enthusiasm and truthfulness. These teachers' virtues influenced the students' moral consciousness, attitudes, outlooks and life styles, which they passionately embodied and explored. Notably, the teachers' connection to what they taught the students motivated, thrilled, challenged and directed the students to think differently about themselves and their opportunities.

The following sections highlights how some students' identity and future prospects were influenced by the school's engagements with the notions of social class distinctions.

#### 6.4. SOCIAL CLASS DIFFERENTIATION AND POSITIONING

Scholars have increasingly noted that social class status does matter due to the power and choices that accompany class and which define the boundaries and possibilities for social interactions, decision making and identity development (Hout, 2008; Rothstein, 2004). Furthermore, Weis (2004) highlights how class is an often invisible form of difference and yet it is there all the time, affecting how and what students learn at every turn. It pervades the values and the purposes of colleges and universities and contributes to determining the courses offered and the books read and discussed. Class is a persistent reality that defines what and how students learn, their available choices, opportunities and subsequently who they become. On the other hand, Kerr and West (2010) highlight that schools are capable of narrowing the social class gaps by restructuring and reorganising their policies, sharing resources, staff expertise and facilities, and by engaging in intervention programmes for the students.

Victoria High perspectives and engagements with the issues of social class framed the thinking, learning and lives of students differently. In this regard Mikaeel noted:

*At that time people always used to say that Victoria was a bourgeois school – where only the privileged would go to. It was always said that Victoria High is an upper-class kind of school. This reputation lured various students to the school, hoping to acquire middle-class values for upward mobility. Most people thought learning at Victoria High was to enable them to get good jobs and better connections to lead middle-class lives.*

Similarly, highlighting the middle-class nature of the school George noted:

*I discovered that they were few kids like me who were from working-class background. We were a very small minority. The school was predominantly middle-class. Most of the kids spoke very good English.*

George explained that the middle-class position of the school challenged him and he often felt misplaced and uncomfortable. He felt intimidated by his inferior working-class background. However, his aspirations and determination to obtain a middle-class education at the school remained his source of hope and refuge.

Furthermore, Antol indicated that the middle-class aspirations and positioning of the school separated and differentiated the students. Describing his experiences, he noted:

*I saw myself as one of the poorest at the school. When I was doing matric we had two informal groups in the matric class. One was called the black power group, which was the group which was politically conscious; that had accepted black consciousness as an ideology and I was part of that. And then we had the Babbie gang; and Babbie means the corner shop owner, this represented the business class.*

Antol's experiences depict how social class identities are also critically important in shaping individuals' feelings about themselves and their interactions with their environments (Aries & Seider, 2007; Hurst, 2010; Orbe, 2004; Ostrove & Long, 2007).

Denford indicated that though there were distinct social class differences among the students, the schools endeavoured to provide the same educational opportunities to all the students. He mentioned:

*Victoria High accepted children from different backgrounds. You know as a child sometimes you don't talk about these things, you can see at that time it was difficult to know, but I could tell that this child is different from me, he is not privileged. You could see that some of the children would have torn jerseys. These children were exposed to middle-class values like the rest of the school. The school was very middle-class, though not at par with the white middle-class school*

Similarly, highlighting how the school accommodated students from various social class background Patricia said:

*Many of the students came from more affluent background than I did. There were three of us who came from a township and the three of us were best friends. The three of us felt that those children who came from more affluent background looked down on us because we came from the townships. I hated it when we had to come to school in civvies because I didn't have nice clothes. I had to share clothes with my sisters. I had to wear the same school shoes as any other school day. So as teenager it wasn't very nice to go to school when it was civvies, I hated it. But my teachers told my friends and I to work hard. The three of us are still friends today - Trichardt, Malcolm and*

*myself. Malcolm is now an architecture, Trichardt is a medical doctor, I am a dentist working with postgraduates in public health. We succeeded as well, if not better, than many of them.*

Patricia explained that her teacher helped her and her friends to realise that their working-class position was not permanent and could be struggled over. They had the potential to achieve the middle-class position espoused by the school if they worked hard. Thus, as a professional currently reflecting on her schooling experiences, she is happy that the school enabled her to successfully overcome her working-class position. In this regard, Ball (2006) suggests that individuals in certain situations achieve their class positions via forms of mobility that are both contingent and strategically dependent on their access to assets and different forms of capital.

Different from other students who highlighted that they were social class differences at Victoria high school, Noor observed,

*I think there were no class differences at Victoria High. It catered more for students in the area and pupils whose parents were there before the Group Areas Act and so it was a community-orientated school. I came from a working-class family and I never felt out of place because the school gave all the students the same educational opportunity.*

Roland also indicated that it was difficult for him to talk about social class at Victoria high. He remarked:

*It's difficult to speak in terms of your classification, especially your social classification, at that point in time. I think from what I remember of life at that time there was no situation when school fees were exorbitant that nobody could get entry into the school. Certainly, people came from very poor backgrounds and I had fellow students who came from townships or sub-economic area and they were able to study there. By and large at that time, people went to their nearest school which was convenient. I came generally from a middle-class background and area. By and large most of the pupils at the school would have been from middle-class coloured areas and families. Even then, to a large extent, obviously certain schools had a certain name: Victoria High and other*

*two schools were generally regarded as the good-quality schools in terms of educational perspective. And also in terms of those who sought to achieve certain academic goals would have gone to those types of schools.*

Similarly, Nadia noted:

*The school would be generally middle-class. I had some of my friends who were wealthy, who had businesses, who had houses with double-storey, and these were close friends of mine. They lived quite comfortable lives. It was generally middle-class, but we would have varied types in that.*

The above has demonstrated the fundamental aspect that the human agency plays to overcome inferiority, stereotypes, and other limiting circumstances. The human agency capacitates the individual's assertiveness, diligence and audacity to do the best as illustrated by Patricia when her teachers urged her not to focus on her social background but to take her schooling seriously as this was to change her future circumstances. Thus, her teachers introduced her to new practices of living that enabled her to cope. More so, the discussion depicted how social class is not a "natural or objective object" but "is culturally and discursively constructed and involves processes of identification, perception, and feeling" (McCalman, 1993:11). The students' engagement with the school's notion of social class exhibited how social class is fluid. It has no clear strata boundaries - and is thus something that develops, enacts, locates positions, differentiates, and fluctuates. It is also achieved (through social mobility), exercised (through social stratification), contested (class struggle), struggled over, protected (social closure), desired (class aspiration), and lived. The following section illustrates how the school's perception of race influenced the schooling experiences of the students and who they became.

## **6.5. RETHINKING RACE**

Victoria High School was established for students defined coloured and the social life of the student was expected to be constructed by this 'colouredness'. Elucidating this, Nkomo, McKinney and Chisholm (2004:3) highlight how

... race was historically inscribed in the functioning of everyday life through those institutions in which the majority of children spent the greater part of their lives. This was particularly in schools, which were one of the principal generators, justifiers and vehicles of racialised thoughts, actions and identities.

In this respect, Foucault (1977) depicts how race is internalised and how the internalisation shapes the inside and the personal lives of the individuals. Race holds the potential to determine how people live, their interactions, job opportunities, schooling and thinking. In schools, students conceived of race in terms of skin colour, and were convinced that certain 'races' behaved in very distinctive ways. Race determined and explained essentially the kind of person someone was. It was viewed as something fixed and fundamental that all individuals possessed and that naturally determined their identification affiliations (Posel, 2001).

Importantly, Victoria High engaged with race in particular ways that transformed their future opportunities, developed their critical thinking, self-concept, respect, sense of self-worth, worldly outlook and their desire to fight for social justice. Outlining how her schooling experiences shifted her understanding of the racial constructs and developed her assertiveness and self-concept Abigail, noted:

*Victoria High School had no restrictions on who to enrol – there was no such thing. In fact, Victoria High was progressive in that they allowed anybody who wanted to come to Victoria to come whether they were white, brown or black. One year the inspector came to the class and pointed out, 'That boy over there, why is he in this class? He should be in Langa'. We had black people in the school. In other class the inspector said, 'That girl looks very white, why is she in this school?' And the teacher would say, 'she wanted to come, she lives nearby'. The inspector said, 'no, she must go to a white school'. I must admit as a designated coloured school, we had sporting fixtures with Langa students. They would come and play against us and we will go and play against them. That was the way our teachers taught us to break down the colour line. The school all the time taught us not to worry about colour. The advantage was that we were breaking down apartheid, physically breaking it down. And intellectually the students fought against apartheid as well.*

Similarly Patricia noted:

*When I went to school there was a complete separation of race. We people of coloured race could not go to African townships without a pass. It was a complete separation of apartheid. There was no interaction encouraged unless you made an effort. But Victoria High refused to recognise race. The school fell under the Coloured Affairs Department and it was understood that it only takes in students of colour, but it enrolled anyone who wanted. They never asked anybody for their birth certificates where their race classification would have been written. We had people who could have come from an African background, but it was not officially stated. We mixed with all kinds of races in sports and debate. If you look at our class, the photograph on top there is the 30th anniversary of our matric class. If you look at the picture you can see that some of the people are very dark and nobody asked them. It was mainly of coloured origin, but the school stressed non-racialism.*

Elucidating the non-racial enrolment policy of the school, Noor said:

*I can tell you about Mr Davids, the vice principal, when he was interviewed about kids who wanted to come to Victoria High he said, 'I used to be invited by the principal to interview people who made applications to the school. We used to point out to the people that although the school falls under the Department of Coloured Affairs, the school has a set of aims, objectives and directions which were very explicit. We used to point out to them that we don't have coloured children in this school. We don't have African children in this school. We do not have Indian children in this school. We have boys and we have girls. This is the programme we have and if you feel you have any prejudices you can leave them outside the gate then you are welcome'. So Victoria High had a mixture of different students.*

Reiterating the strong non-racial policy of the school, Cheryl who was both a student and later a teacher at the school, remarked:

*The school was designated for coloured students and periodically we would have people/officials coming to check at the school. I remember being a student as the school officials coming to check how many students were Indians? How many students were coloured? How many students were African? At that stage I don't think we had a black African at the school. When I was a teacher it was different to what was there*

*when I was a student. I remember filling in a form to write how many African, Indians, coloureds, whatever it meant, the teachers refused to fill it in and the officials were frustrated because the teachers said, 'We are all human beings'. There was a lot of opposition at the school and I think it made us think. I mean it helped me to accept people irrespective of religion and irrespective of racial classification.*

Expounding the unwavering proliferation of a non-racial philosophy at the school Denford noted:

*Some of the students in my class grew up just around the school, but the whole area around the school – Claremont – was declared white. Then the school was facing closure because the area had been declared white. When the Group Areas Act declared it white then the coloured people had to move out. For some reasons – I don't know why – they did not close the school. Victoria High was a coloured school with more of coloured, Indian, Muslim children, but also a handful of black children into the school. They were bussed into the school. And you know then under apartheid we grew and lived separately, coloured people lived together; black people lived in the location and the whites on their own. There was very little interaction; you know people just didn't have the space to connect. But at Victoria High, I started meeting other people who were outside my community.*

Explicating how the school defeated the racial stigma, Naeema said:

*Blacks were not allowed in the coloured school by law. Predominantly we had coloured students at the school because it was designated for coloureds. So the only time you would see a white student, it would be one on exchange programme. I think when I was in Grade 10, that's when I saw one black child. By the time I was in matric there were two black children in my class and the blacks participated well with others in the school. They were included and not isolated. We also had white teachers at the school.*

Similarly, Henry recounted:

*The significant thing about the school was that no white person was hated. I could not believe this because we were in the vibe of apartheid. Mr van der Merwe used to take us for rugby. He used to eat our lunch. If he finds something nice he would eat and then*



*give you ten rand and tell you to buy lunch. This was nice and I enjoyed him. These were the type of teachers we had there. No one talked to him that we were fighting apartheid and he was not supposed to be in a coloured school. Because of the way he treated many people, I can remember many times when he said he was more loved by the coloured people than by the whites. He found a home here and that's why he taught there for years.*

Henry further remarked:

*We also had teachers coming from Sea Point and Camps Bay. So they had so-called white teachers. These teachers dedicated their extra salaries that they were paid because they were working in danger zones according to the government. Do you know if a white teacher worked in a predominantly black school like Victoria High, they got danger pay, got extra pay because they were working at a school where they can be confronted by the students not from their colour? They got an extra salary and they called it danger pay. The teachers that worked at Victoria High gave their extra salaries to buy school equipment. Mr Fourie and his wife gave their extra money to buy the paint or repair windows for the good of Victoria High from their danger pay.*

The students demonstrated that the school's non-racial policy made them realise that the racial identity in particular the coloured categorisation that they were given, was a construct, and not their race. The school encouraged them to think about themselves as a human race. This form of racial identification influenced new patterns of thinking, perception of themselves, school interactions and decisions. It developed their self-esteem, self-understanding and the desire to bring change to their society. Furthermore, the school urged the students to rationally think about race in their life contexts.

## **6.6. INTELLECTUALLY ENGAGING WITH RACE**

The school's teachers, Mr Vincent, Mr Walters, Mr September and Mrs Daniels, collectively indicated that the emphasis of Victoria High's creed on non-racialism was intended to instil confidence in the students and to encourage them to realise how the patterns of racial discrimination in academic and employment settings (Bigler, Averhart & Liben, 2003), impacted their schooling and advancement opportunities later in life (Ogbu, 2003).

Describing how the school intellectually engaged with the issue of race, Mikaeel narrated:

*I think at one time we had a group of people that were committed to their task; teaching a facilitative role in debunking the myth of race and always emphasising the values of non-racialism are critical in understanding new South Africa. Non-racialism did not just involve the kind of schooling activities; it also involved the way we played sport. We were a SAFA-aligned school, that is, an organisation that believed there is no normal sport in an abnormal society. Then we would not attend any venue that encouraged multi-racial sport. So then South Africa was excluded from all international competitions. So there was nothing about Victoria High that did not have a deeper and broader understanding of what the purpose of schooling was all about, and that to me is critical. Our understanding of sport was that we were not going to buy into the identity that separated South Africa; our teachers were never going to focus on that. Our teachers said, 'We are one race, a human race'. And these are some of the simple things that every student learnt at Victoria High School.*

Solidifying how the school endeavoured to maintain its strong non-racial perspective, Noor stated:

*I recall Mr Davids was invited by the first president of the democratic South Africa to his interim speech at the West Coast. So they all went to the West Coast and this is important to note the president is an honourable person, but look at what Mr Davids did, when the president said, 'You coloured, you white, you Indian, you African', Mr Davids left because he did not believe in coloured, Indian and white. He believed we were all African. He expected the president to address everyone as African and when the president said white, African, Indian, he felt there was still racism in such a tone. He wanted to see a new South Africa where we were all human beings.*

Noor highlighted that the position taken by Mr Davids depicted how seriously the school strived to eradicate the racial pigeonholes. He further noted:

*The school always stressed that those who remained in South Africa and did not run to Australia or Canada, everyone who remained in the country must be seen as African because we are Africans by nature, we love the country. That is the mind-set that the*

*school pushed, you see. And I think to a great extent a lot of Victorians proudly fought for Africa, South Africa, Africa for Africans. These were from the ideas from Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement. Biko believed that anybody who claims to be on the side of the blacks, that person is a black person.*

Further depicting how the school politically engaged with race George noted:

*There were many ideas going around the school on how we should fight for our freedom. Some people said, 'We don't want to look at colour because we are non-racial. Why referring to one as black? We are all human.' That was the main idea at the school. There was another idea that actually we need to emphasise our blackness, we need to be proud of ourselves as black people. And we can't ignore race. Look at the white people and what they did to us; we want to fight back and to fight back you need to be conscious of your blackness and embrace your own identity.*

Similarly, Mikaeel explained:

*We had people that were involved in various forms of activism, that had a clear understanding of the role that Victoria High has played in the development of students – creating a set of ideas that would help in the proposed times that we wanted after democracy, had a clear understanding of a non-racial South Africa. The tri-cameral elections, those kinds of things, were racial politics to the kinds of the Bantustans and ghettos and I did geography; this obviously, you know, it was not just given that you a Xhosa nation would go to Transkei, the Zululand nation would be in Durban. These were things that were passed on as a reality. You know what they were doing? They introduced aims motivated in channels like TV2, TV3 and TV4. These things were meant to make the people think that the Bantustans were created at that time when the minority living in South Africa were considered the majority, because this whole land was where the people had to actually live. For me at school to have developed that understanding was greatly attributed to the fact that I had teachers that did not just teach me, but developed a citizenry that could question, interrogate and that could make a difference.*

The students illustrated how Victoria High created a supportive learning environment to dialogue race-related issues. Critically thinking about race enabled the students to analyse and reflect on their ever-evolving identities. They critically engaged with the understanding of race or the meaning that they were to attach to race as this influenced their learning, identity and sense of selves. Critically engaging with race empowered the students to develop new languages and understanding of who they were and wanted to become. It assisted them to question the racial stereotypes and promoted them to view the set racial differences from a different social justice perspective. They questioned the notion of racial diversity and this tailored their perception, expectations and interactions in different ways. Furthermore, critically engaging with race enabled the students to be in control of what they learnt as they were able to assess their own thinking. In addition, the school's attitude towards religion influenced who the students became as illustrated below.

#### **6.7. THE SCHOOL'S ATTITUDE TO RELIGION**

Victoria High identified itself as a secular school and refused to acknowledge any form of religion. The school believed religion discouraged rationality, individuality and intolerance. The school's discourse considered religion as a powerful tool to condone the inequalities and injustices of apartheid. According to this discourse, religion promoted obedience, forgiveness and faith and disapproved of questioning which the school regarded pivotal in developing the students' critical thinking. Thus, the non-religious stance of the school influenced the students' learning experiences, thinking and lives in various ways.

Outlining, the non-religious position of the school, Noor remarked;

*The key members of the schools like Mr Davids felt religion is the opium of the people. Religion is negative for people. It creates differences. It is negative for unity.*

Noor explained that Mr Davids' perspective was shaped by the classical critiques of religion, Marx and Engels, who criticised religion as the opium of the people that gives an illusory hope for a better life. Marx and Engels thought "religion was nothing but the fantastic reflection in man's mind of those external forces that control their daily life, the reflection of which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces" (Super & Turley, 2006:12).

Illustrating how the school upheld its non-religious position Cheryl noted:

*I know the school didn't tolerate religion. So the school didn't have stuff like prayers – there were no prayer sessions. We were not allowed to set up any kind of religious club at the school. We were seen as a non-denominational school. It doesn't mean that the students who attended the school didn't have their own religions – but religion was not practised at the school. And I think that was also important because we didn't have one religion against another at the school. And I would say at that time, half the students were Muslim and the other half was Christian or had Christian background. And I think because religion played a mini-role in people's lives, it was not considered at all. But what was important was your humanitarianism; how you acted as a human being, how you respected others no matter what the person looks like or what job the person had. There was that inculcation of respect for humanity.*

Also depicting how the school's dismissive approach to religion developed his critical thinking Antol noted:

*It was my first time at Victoria High to interact with an environment that did not have any religion. I was very impressed with the fact that they had prayers for those who wanted to go for prayers in the morning and political speeches for those who wanted to go to political speeches. I was very impressed because it was the only school doing that. I was surprised that there were some teachers who were not religious. This helped me, alerted me to the fact that I was not to follow some or other religion blindly. It stimulated me to study religion at a broader perspective.*

Ironically, Antol indicated that he had a very strong religious upbringing prior to enrolling at Victoria High School. His parents trusted that he would continue to exhibit the internalised religious virtues instilled in him and become an exemplary, obedient, dependable and disciplined boy. Describing his religious background, Antol noted:

*I was born and baptised in the Anglican Church. Religion was a big issue with my mother. I was set to become a priest. She took me to a German mission primary school. It was a Moravian primary school.*

Similarly, Patricia came from a Christian background and her interactions with the school changed her religious outlook. Explaining her initial religious stance prior to joining Victoria High, she noted:

*When my parents realised that Victoria High was a secular school they didn't think that important at that stage. At that time I went to Victoria High, I was fourteen years and they thought I had attained the grounding in religion.*

Patricia further explained that by the time she finished her matric at the school she was very critical about religion. Both Antol and Patricia's parents thought their children had acquired sufficient religious grounding that would not be withered away by other, external forces. However, Victoria High changed their religious perspectives. In this respect, Wellman and Tokuno (2004:292) view religion as "providing points of moral, social and political legitimization that are typical of social norms".

On the other hand some students thought the non-religious position of the school created boundaries between students of different religious background. Highlighting how the attitude of religion impacted on some students Mikaeel noted:

*In the years that I was at Victoria High there was a big conflict over the students that wanted to attend mosque on a Friday. Victoria High tradition was that you come here for an education and they didn't want anything to distract in the period that you were at school to learn. There was a lot of activism from the people who wanted to go to mosque on Friday and then come back to school. It was said that those 'who want to go to mosque you can go on your conscience or stay behind', but the school did not adjust its timetable.*

Similarly, indicating the opposition of some Muslims (other Muslims supported the school's stance) to the secular stance of the school, Noor noted:

*What the Muslims fought for at Victoria High was to go to the mosque because Friday is a holiday for the Muslims and they have to go to the mosque on Friday at 1 pm. There is a verse in the Quran (Muslim bible) that says all ye believe hasten earnestly towards the remembrance of God, leave all your business and traffic when it comes to the Friday prayer. God says it is better for you to know this. This is an opportunity for*

*you to gather. It's a mass prayer where you have a common message in prayer. The Muslim students opposed people like Mr Davids [vice-principal], because he said, 'Everybody is equal and we do not bring religion in the school because others might be Christians, Jews or other religions'.*

In addition Noor explained:

*The Muslims felt the school must treat everybody equally because we are Muslims. On Sunday it is a rest day and the Christian will go to church because this is a Christian country. Saturday is also a holiday and the Jews go to church. The Muslim wanted to go to mosque on Fridays to maintain their Muslim identity. I remember we marched to go to mosque. They used the so-called Muslim prefect students to stand at the gates to stop other Muslims from going to mosque. You know divide and rule policy that the government had and they tried to use it in the school in any case.*

Mikaeel and Noor are of the opinion that the school's attitude to religion created open discrimination and injustices. They felt that the school favoured the Christians at the expense of the Muslims. The school adhered to a Christian calendar and failed to recognise the Muslim religious affiliated students. As Muslims they felt the school excluded them and deprived them of their human rights. They thought this contradicted the school's ascription to democracy. The great determination of the Muslim students to oppose the school and leave classes to attend the Mosque indicates how religion provides a powerful engine for individual and group identity formation.

Wellman and Tokuno (2004:292) highlight how "religion has always functioned to shape individual and social identities and inspire group formation". On the other hand, the Muslim reactions in the school depicts how religion is often an independent cultural force in society, as it has the tendency to become a threat to other cultural and political powers.

Besides the non-religious position of the school framing their identity and understanding of the world in specific ways, the students explained that their personalities were also framed by the numerous activities in the school and what the teachers underscored as important during their various schooling years at the school.

Furthermore, the non-religious attitude of the school impacted on the lives of the students. Explaining the influence of religion in his life, George said:

*I used to go to church with my mother and siblings. When I joined Victoria High I was exposed to discussions where they questioned the existence of God. I also questioned myself and I began doubting the validity of religion. I stopped going to church.*

In this regard, Foner and Alba (2008:361) assert that “religion gives hope and peace. It also serves to meet many social needs.”

This section has illustrated how the non-religious attitudes of the school created contradictions and disagreements. The Muslim students were unwilling to put aside their Islamic values and felt entitled to equal respect for their religious beliefs, which the school denied them. The Muslims thought the school’s failure to recognise their religion deprived them of their liberty and human rights, thus treating them unjustly. In this regard, Fraser (2007) notes how some institutional patterns deny some people the status of full partnership in social interaction and prevent them from participating as peers in social life as well as denying them the capacity to make independent decisions and judgments. More so, the school’s religious attitudes impacted some students’ consciousness, feelings of self-worth, self-respect and self-esteem and identity. The next section outlines how the learning experiences impacted their lives.

## **6.8. PASSING THROUGH THE GATES OF SCHOOL**

All the participants attested that Victoria High played a significant role in framing their characters, aspirations, relationship and worldly viewpoints in particular ways. Highlighting what he learnt, Denford noted:

*Victoria High had good teachers that emphasised the importance of education. They emphasised that education was more important than money. It was valuable to be good children, to know that we were part of the community and had to be responsible citizens who are not materialistic, but humane. This I suppose influenced my view of the world. My exposure to people who were thinkers and also to literature and writing,*



*you know, makes me question things. I took a lot from the school that shaped me, I think, in many ways.*

Similarly, Nadia said:

*The academic focus at Victoria High taught me the importance of studying further. When I matriculated I studied law. I did my B.A. degree at UCT. I then did my Honours degree at UWC (University of the Western Cape). I did my two years' articles at Legal Aid Clinic UCT, and then I did a course for six months and I was in London for two years and then I came back. I also learnt the value of making a difference; making a difference to yourself and others.*

Nadia further indicated that the lessons she learned at Victoria High were invaluable, so much so that she strives to impart them to her four sons.

Henry highlighted that Victoria High taught him the significance of diligence. He remarked:

*The school taught me to work hard. I learnt that life is a ball-game and if it is thrown on you, you must take the punches. I learnt at Victoria High that you may fall but you must rise again. When I failed to go to a technical college after my matric, I knew it was not the end of life. I had to work as a menial labourer, digging trenches, but still I studied part time and later went to train as an electrician and now I do not dig trenches anymore.*

Elucidating how what he learnt shaped his entire life Henry noted:

*I learnt that success comes through hard work and it's you who determine the type of life you want. It's like you have this idea that we are going to get married until death do us part, but some 20 or 30 years your wife dies. And now you think there is a new ball-game, but the ball-game only starts by you – what is it that you put into the ball-game. You can pull away and just leave or you can go on. Life is about choices – what is it that you want in life and not about what other people tell you. I learnt that it is an essential thing in life to overcome. And to be part of a society – no matter where you come from you can achieve the best. If you are willing to succeed it is entirely up to you, and I think that principle came out across very strongly. Don't let obstacles stand*

*in your way. There are times when you cannot go ahead, but you will still achieve. It's a matter of mind-set – mind over matter to succeed.*

Likewise, highlighting the value of hard work, Cheryl noted:

*I think Victoria High School was very important at driving home the fact that you can always succeed. You just have to put effort into it. You just have to be determined. The school didn't tolerate failure. And I think that kind of ethos does help.*

Cheryl noted that the school's notion of hard work was carried out through its effective use of a wider curriculum. The school offered science, commercial and practical subjects. She supposed that such a wide range of subjects catered for the various students' interests.

Also, highlighting the important lessons of hard work, Naeema noted:

*I took away a lot; an ethos of hard work, a strong belief in myself. I believe that I can do anything. I believe that because that is what I was taught. When I was in school, I was encouraged to write poetry. I was good at languages and my teachers encouraged me to write. I joined poetry competitions at UCT. I won awards and competitions. I learnt that the world is your voice and everything is within your reach and that you can do anything. I took that away with me in life up until now. I believed that. There were two or so teachers who were problematic and did not put their hearts to their work. But generally the school functioned in a way that made you have confidence. It made you feel that you had the capacity. It gave you confidence. You would just feel determined to do high grade subjects. The teachers were ready to deliver their utmost best.*

Besides the teachers' attempts to encourage the students to work hard and advance educationally, Patricia learnt various organisation skills. Outlining this she said:

*I am very grateful and privileged to have been at the school were they opened up our minds. I learnt language skills, the critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills – how to approach a problem and find out how to address that problem. And these, I have carried out in my life and even into my current job, how to manage success, manage time, I don't think they teach these in schools, how to make a timetable after school*

*so that you study enough for what is required in the subjects. We had very good grounding. The teacher would sit down with us and say, 'If you are going to study, this is the approach to study, don't just go and learn this by heart'. You had to study with understanding. That is what they wanted and not to recite.*

The students explained how the school taught them to think critically and not accept the thoughts of others and take things for granted. This developed their competency, agency, autonomy, sense of self-worth, and ability to solve problems. The teachers also made them realise the value of knowledge in transforming their thinking and life opportunities. Thus, most of the students went on to take up professional jobs and were able to confidently contribute to the progress of various institutions and organisations. Besides academically benefiting from the schooling experiences, the students also obtained other skills that were pertinent in their lives as illustrated in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### **6.9. A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE**

Susan explained that she benefited tremendously from the teachers incessant insistence on the significance of organisation, orderliness and punctuality. She said:

*I am happy that I went to Victoria High and not the newly built school in our area. A lot of my friends went there and one of the girls in primary school who was really intelligent and hardworking, and I was not as hardworking as she was, went to that high school and also ended up coming to UCT and after the first year she dropped out. I think she was not just as prepared you know. Victoria High School taught us to be organised, ready and versatile.*

Similarly, Patricia explained that the organisational skills she obtained at the school makes her effective in her job. Describing her orderliness and precision in her current job she stated:

*People here even today say you write beautiful reports. You write beautifully and I think to myself some of those people have gone to privileged schools – they have been to schools where they had the best education and yet my education from Victoria seems to be much more superior to what they were taught at school.*

Besides managerial skills, Henry indicated that Victoria High equipped him with moral skills. He noted:

*Victoria High was good for enlightening me about the world and that I should never forget my roots – always maintain them. I learnt to treat everyone with respect. There was also an influence of my parents as well. Victoria High added the fundamental issues that were laid by my parents. We were taught to respect each other and appreciate that we had different views of thinking and viewing things.*

The students indicated that they learnt to be punctual, organised and careful in all that they did. These traits became embedded in them and enabled them to be efficient, diligent, responsible, competent and successful in their lives. In addition, the school also created spaces for the students to interact and learn from each other.

#### **6.10. SOCIAL NETWORKS**

Victoria High created spaces where the students valued friendships and working in teams through various sporting activities, social welfare and recreation clubs as well as theatre arts.

Highlighting how the literature he shared united him with his classmates and shaped his thinking, George noted:

*When the apartheid government banned most of the good books that we could read, we found our own books that were banned. We had to start our own underground network for certain books and photocopies. We circulated photocopies of speeches by famous people; the Black Benchers – people from America, Karl Marx, Lenin and Trotsky – all those people. We were school kids, but we were reading books that professors read. So we were doing stuff that was a way ahead. There were certain books that people read, like 'Blame me on History' written by Bloke Modisane. This was a banned book. Modisane was one of the famous journalists from Soweto and was forced to leave South Africa. It was him, Miriam Makeba and other famous people that left the country. Their stuff used to circulate, stuff from the American civil rights world. That stuff circulated.*

George indicated that these readings nurtured a common thinking among some of the students and created groupings and close friendships. The groups remained in-touch, updating each other of any developments and challenges in their lives.

Also describing how he has maintained his circles of friends from Victoria High, Wallace said:

*I can't really put my hand on how the bond of our relationship persists more than thirty years after leaving Victoria High. I think firstly, we were very close when we were at school. We had sports and we got together and competed against other schools. We were very proud. Anyway firstly, we had inter-house with different colours like red house, green house, yellow house and blue house. We competed against our own friends. The competitions were fierce, right, but it was fun and friendly. Then we had inter-school with other schools and when we got together, Victoria High, Belmont, etc. that gave us a sense of togetherness that made us feel we were part of a school. We also played soccer. All that created a sense of camaraderie. We felt very much attached to our school via connections with our friends. To me it was one of the things that we were constantly reminded that, listen, we are Victorians. We would sing songs that created a sense of nationalism at school level.*

Wallace further outlined that going to Victoria High, a school designated for coloureds students under apartheid, made him politically conscious and value friendship and unity. Elucidating this, he said:

*We do have a close connection network with my former school mates. I see my friends I went with to school on a regular basis. We have class gatherings and reunions. Our last get-together was last week and we had another one a week before. And now and again we take weekends away together. Recently we went to Hout Bay. We never lost touch. Now we are in touch with cell phones. About ten years ago we decided that we should not just communicate with each other through the phone, but rather see each other and have coffee or something. And now with the technology we also use the social media: WhatsApp, group chats where everybody can organise, 'Guys next week let's have supper in Cape Town.' And people share their views – people simply say, 'I am in, I am in'.*

Wallace believed this unity was developed at Victoria High through the teachers' emphasis on the significance of teamwork. They were encouraged to work in groups, share ideas and assist one another. Furthermore, Wallace highlighted that their social network was very strong and not restricted by distance noting:

*In our reunion of the class of 1982, one of the guys is a pilot and he flies Emirates and is here now. The other guy is in New Zealand, the other guys are in Johannesburg, another guy in Australia is a dentist and another lives in Bristol in London. The one from Bristol was here three weeks ago and we all met and had lunch together. We had lunch at a restaurant near Victoria High called the Avenues and all our class was there. That's what we do. When the guys from overseas are here we meet and that's what we do often. We always try to catch up. Some of my friends, we were together from Sub A, to Victoria High up till today.*

Similarly, Patricia indicated that her class often met to share the memories they had of their schooling at Victoria High remarking:

*Our matric class of 1973 meets at our reunions yearly. We talk about how Victoria shaped our lives. People talk about their accomplishments. All have wonderful qualifications. One of my classmates is the dean of education at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, several lawyers, several doctors. We have all been educated very well at the school.*

Substantiating the enduring friendship and spirit of unity nurtured at Victoria High, Antol explained:

*Can I also mention that at our 30th reunion I objected to the fact that the practical teachers were not present and it became quite an issue so that at the 40th reunion in this year the Woodwork teacher was present and the Physical Education teacher. I mean there was positive responses by the other ex-pupils to the extent were we have resolved this year that those teachers who were always looked down upon were invited to come to our reunion.*

Elucidating how the strong friendships were extended to the family members, Susan narrated:

*I attended this year a funeral of one of the guy's mother that attended Victoria High. It was hard for me to see how many of his classmates were there. There were numerous people at the funeral and I could not find parking space. So I had to leave and went back in the evening hanging around, eating and talking and I could not believe it as I could see joy on the people's faces, happy to see each other after ten or more years. I was so amazed that there were so many people of his class – and that was particularly a very close class. They all knew his mum and his dad who had passed away many years before. It's quite amazing, isn't it?*

Likewise, depicting the enduring friendships established at Victoria High School, Abigail explained:

*Do you know that I had a birthday party here on Saturday and one of my friends, she and I were at Victoria together. She is going to be 61 and I am 64 and we are still friends from the days that we were at school – more than 45 years ago.*

Most students highlighted how they revered the friendship established at school. However, Susan's response above implies that she did not have strong ties with her classmates. In this regard, Devine (2009) notes that participation in valued social networks depends on the individual's ability to present him/herself as 'competent', or having the 'mutual dispositions' of the norms of the governing social group.

## **6.11. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has highlighted how Victoria High developed the students' transposable capital that powerfully constructed the identities and the thinking of the students differently. Notably, under apartheid, the racial classifications entailed the students to have particular thinking, prospects and expectations in line with their categorisations. Conversely, Victoria High designated for coloured students taught its students to deny racial classification, social boundaries and religion. Unfortunately, in the case of religion, some students queried why Victoria High did not accommodate their religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the students were exposed to practical teaching where the teachers were good role models of diligence, punctuality, commitment, wide reading, organisation, orderliness, creativeness and

optimism. This exposure developed the students' self-worth, respect for humanity, assertiveness and love for knowledge.

The next chapter discusses how the teachers' pedagogical practices enhanced the students' learning, thinking and lives.



## **CHAPTER 7: THE IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL'S PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES ON THE STUDENTS AT VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses how the school's pedagogical practices shaped the quality of the students' educational experiences and transposable capital. It presents a picture of how the teachers' instructional approaches developed the students' sense of purpose for being at school, and the acquisition and development of their skills, interests, focus, competencies, confidence, understandings, choices, abilities, performances, perspectives, thinking, reasoning, identities. Highlighting the importance of pedagogy, Bhowmik, Banerjee and Banerjee (2013:05) explain that pedagogy supports students' intellectual engagement, connectedness to the wider world and promotes the wellbeing of students, teachers and the school community.

Importantly, this chapter considers the teacher's pedagogy through the eyes and experiences of the fourteen students and four teachers. It does not interrogate pedagogy in terms of what the students were taught, or what was in the curriculum. This chapter engages with how the teachers perceived the politics of the curriculum at that time. In other words, the focus is on what the teachers felt needed to be taught in addition to the formal curriculum - what literature refers to as the hidden curriculum. The chapter concentrates on the school's culture that made students think in particular ways and consequently respond in ways that the official or formal school curriculum does not necessarily include. It is about instilling a particular understanding of the world. In this regard, Wise, Lee, Litzinger, Marra and Palmer (2004) show how the 'hidden curriculum' contributes to the development of thinking skills and the acquisition of relevant knowledge that support students in the context of their studies, daily life and careers. In this manner, the hidden curriculum refers to those dimensions of school activities that run alongside, and at key points intersects, the formal curriculum. Thus, it is the pedagogical transfer of the intellectual, political and cultural discourses embedded in the institutional culture of the school, i.e. the school's hidden curriculum that forms the focus of this chapter.

The next sections engage with the discourses that demonstrate how the pedagogical practices employed by the teachers at Victoria High inspired the students to learn and develop their

critical thinking, identity, assertiveness, sense of self-worth, as well as the desire to fight for social justice, value for knowledge, responsibility, teamwork and connection with the world.

## 7.2 GIVING STUDENTS WINGS TO FLY

This section demonstrates that when teachers engage students in practical activities and use examples related to their daily experiences, learning becomes thought-provoking, real and transferable. Furthermore, when teachers relate subject content to students' contexts it increases the students' understanding, knowledge, skills and confidence. More so, when teachers passionately teach and exhibit their subject expertise, it inspires and broadens the students' knowledge and understanding of the world and empowers them to take on more challenging work.

Highlighting how the teachers' pedagogical practices were enlightening and interesting Mikaeel noted:

*Our learning was fascinating, we were kept captivated. We had Mr Bruce, who during guidance lessons – what we call now life orientation – would talk about career education. Talking about the racialisation of tertiary education and what is the difference between a bush college and an institution like UCT and something like that. Within guidance, for example, there was openness, it is quite amazing how many years have gone by, but I still remember that.*

Similarly, Patricia outlined that she benefited a lot from pragmatic teaching at the school. She noted:

*One of the things I remember fondly is that there was a pond in front of the classroom and we would leave the classroom and Mrs Pretorius would go into the pond, put out her hand and pull out this green stuff and she would teach us from the practical things of bird and osmosis in the pond, you know, that kind of thing. From practical experience, I remember very clearly her different ways of teaching. When she wants to teach us about how birds stay in the air or about flights, the structure of a bird, she found out that my father kept pigeons. She asked me to bring a pigeon in a cage to school and there we had a lesson. I remember pulling out a wing. She taught us about*

*the different elements of this bird. This was fabulous teaching – very practical teaching way beyond what we were told to do in the syllabus.*

The teachers' practical demonstrations also enthused and enchanted the students. Susan explained:

*Mrs McCarthy, a white woman, was my Grade 10 teacher. The inspiring thing about her was how she read text – how text came alive, whether it was a poem or prose, and she had a stutter which could have made it worse, but she actually made it alive. When she read a poem about the 'war' you know it would just come out alive. She was just inspiring as a teacher and made me want to read, because she read with so much emphasis. I think generally I quite enjoyed languages because the language teachers were inspiring and fun.*

Similarly, Wallace indicated that he had fascinating and thought-provoking literature lessons. He notes that:

*We had a very good English teacher, Mr Walters. He spoke English very well and, if you listen to him talking, you will think he was a white man talking. He had a nice way of talking English. He would encourage reading. He would come to school and suggests certain books we should read. He urged us to engage in vigorous discussions even of a very adult nature. He was not afraid to speak on any topic because he felt that it was necessary for us as young adults that needed to learn. He allowed us to think critically, but would not tolerate noise. He stressed the importance of order and discipline in the discussions.*

Similarly, Naeema noted:

*There were many teachers and they explained their subject content well. I remember my Grade 8 English teacher. You know, I have never found a high school teacher who reads to the class. She would read the introduction of a book in class with great passion and taught us good expressions. She really influenced my life. She developed my reading interest. Personally, I love reading. English became my best subject. English became my passion. Mr Swartz, who also later became the principal, taught me English. From him, I first began to have the thought that I wanted to become a teacher.*

*My Social Studies teacher in Grade 8 and Maths teacher also were very knowledgeable of their subject content and they taught with passion.*

Furthermore, George indicated that the teachers encouraged teamwork which taught him the importance of unity, friendship, responsibility, reliability, respect, a sense of achievement, tolerance and to value differences. He explained that:

*English was always interesting, I remember Mrs Faber, a famous school principal of the school. She was always seen as someone who loved poetry and someone who had the power of the word. We would listen carefully and take it in. There was also a woman who taught me German, Mrs Vascour, she was quite amazing. I really liked her approach. We were eight kids in the class so it was kind of easy to do group work and a lot of discussion.*

The above students' experiences of the pedagogical practices employed by the teachers demonstrate how the pedagogy of the teachers impacted the nature of classroom environment, social interactions, the quality of intellectual engagement with the subject/content taught, and the retention and application of the concepts taught. The students were inspired to learn and think about what they learnt, giving it meaning and value. Furthermore, the teachers also encouraged the students to share ideas and learn from each other and their environments as illustrated in the ensuing section.

### **7.3. LEARNING THROUGH OTHERS**

This section describes how students actively learn from each other, through peer teaching, sport, discussions and their interactions in different situations. These various interactions excite and unlock the students' potential as they share knowledge, ideas and their experiences. Exemplifying how the students learnt from peer teaching Abigail noted:

*Some teachers utilised peer teaching. My husband, who was a student at the school, was good at book keeping. There was no teacher for book keeping. He studied book keeping via correspondence. He would study by himself right into the night and the next day he, the student, would teach other students. He got a first class matric. Then,*

*when he and other ex-students qualified they came back to teach. The school, I believe, preferred old students to come back to teach.*

Substantiating the use of peer teaching and other teaching approaches, Mr Walters, one of the school's former teachers, explained:

*Number one, you know the respect for knowledge and learning and the respect for the teacher as a source of learning for us was important. We did have disciplinary problems, but that wasn't the order of the day. There was respect for learning and knowledge and the regard for the source of knowledge. The whole question of diligence, hard work, and to take responsibility for your own learning were emphasised. The teacher was there, but not there to spoon-feed you, you had to take responsibility for your own learning as well. So that was the approach. Another approach was certainly the children learn from one another, and hence the approach much spoken about today in education, something which we did long ago, the question of peer teaching. That peer teaching didn't only happen in the class, but after school as well. I remember my daughter was a tutor to some Grade 8 students and she had her class after school. And that kind of approach was very important as we had limited resources.*

In addition, to peer teaching the teachers also invited outside experts in various fields to deliver lectures that served to enlighten the students about world affairs. In this respect, Mikaeel explained that:

*Whenever there was an awareness programme we had people from different professions who came to give some talks. We felt that the curriculum that was there, that instead of schools being sites of subjugation they actually became sites of education and emancipation. We had Mr Davids, his lessons made us conscious of our political situation at that time ... He would stimulate the class and really make us think and look at the world we inhabit, South Africa as a country and also globally, looking at things around the world and how the system shapes us. He educated us to look at life critically.*

Elucidating how the teachers encouraged and developed the students' critical thinking both inside and outside the school environment, Noor explained:

*Mr Davids used to tell us 'when you get home, don't open the fridge, go and look behind the fridge'. In other words, what he meant was look behind at what makes the fridge work. It is electricity. Then how much electricity? Who is using electricity? Mr Davids urged us to study.*

Noor highlighted that this approach to teaching taught him to think and question. Paulo Freire (1970) supports such critical approaches to learning, believing that they empower the students to move out of a culture of silence by learning to 'read the world'.

Patricia explained how the teachers went beyond the school curriculum to explain how social, political and economic contexts intersect and influence the thinking, perspectives and decisions of people:

*My English teacher opened up a whole world of English to me, way beyond English itself. When she taught us about George Bernard Shaw, she didn't simply teach about George Bernard Shaw but also taught about the history of that time, what was happening in the world that made George Bernard Shaw write in a certain way. So it was literature from a completely different angle. In fact, when I left school, I so much wanted to study English because of the way she taught us and opened up the world. She also introduced me to poetry, we used to have poetry readings at Victoria that made us see poetry from a different angle, read, enjoy, feel the word in your tongue, you know, this made you excited about the process of being educated.*

In addition, Antol highlighted that the teachers succeeded in deeply engaging him in the learning process and building confidence in English and drama:

*We had a good English teacher that had a good orientation to theatre. As a class generally once a year or twice a year we staged a set work book and the advantage of that is all students will do very well in that set book because they know the story inside out. I recall when we were doing 'St Jones' set book, we formed the St Jones drama and staged the book to the school. When I was in Grade 11 we had a play from George Bernard Shaw. I think that also had an enormous effect on me because it awakened in*

*me the interest in theatre and I started attending theatre at UCT, you know plays. I went to workshops on drama and I developed myself in theatre. What also happened was that myself and two others, we formed a theatre group called the 'Trio' and we produced plays – one play a month – and the school allowed us space to produce a play in such a way that everyone would come see it though we didn't have a hall. We would have the production three or four times yearly when certain grades would then come.*

As the Trio's drama skills developed, Antol describes how they extended their drama productions beyond the school and used their plays to inform people of what was happening within the country's political landscape. The group used this platform to demonstrate their personal concerns with the apartheid government:

*We used theatre quite extensively against apartheid. We had what we called guerrilla theatre; where we would do workshops or sketch something that had happened recently and we would go and stage that at a train terminus, bus stops or wherever there was a large group of people gathered. We did this very effectively such that by the time the police would come we would be gone to another venue doing the same thing there. And then we would pack up, separate and move to another terminus, At Victoria High, drama was recognised. The Trio workshopped a play, 'My God, My Skin, My Country'. We heard that there was a black theatre festival to be held by universities in Cape Town. We were determined to go and perform. There were invitees from the embassy. We performed to adults and international audience. At the end of our play we gave a black power salute, pulled it down, and showed a peace sign. They sat us down and had a conversation with us about ideologies because they were opposed to black consciousness.*

Antol claimed that their performances lured many people, but threatened the apartheid government. Illustrating the significance of drama in teaching, Adomat (2009) shows how drama activities can pull in the hesitant reader and encourage his interest in the reading. Adomat (2009:629) states that, "by interacting as characters through drama, children generate new meanings and possibilities for stories and come to understand stories and their implications from multiple perspectives". Furthermore, drama enables students to interact

with other students to make connections between the text and the real world. Elaborating the positive effects of drama Haberman (1991:293) states that:

Whenever students are actively involved, it is likely that good teaching is going on. Doing an experiment is infinitely better than watching one or reading about one. Participating as a reporter, a role player, or an actor can be educational. Constructing things can be a vital activity. We need graduates who have learned to take action in their own behalf and on behalf of others.

Besides drama, Cheryl indicated that the teachers employed a variety of methods that stimulated their thinking and broadened their knowledge of the world that they inhabited. She explains how the teachers encouraged on-going discussions:

*There was a debating society. Especially in language classes we had lots of debates and discussions. We would for example have invited speakers to come and address us and we would ask questions. I was part of the SRC (student representative council), and they provided opportunities for us within class time and outside of class time to discuss and to debate. In Grade 11 and 12, I had a German teacher. At first I could not understand her methodology. After a while, I came to appreciate it because what she could do was actually teach us language through literature. That was brilliant, you know, she taught us sentence structure while you are busy reading your novel in German. What I also liked about her was her knowledge of German literature. She had an immense interest in the world which she could share with us.*

Cheryl felt that such an open and deliberative methodology was very useful and enriched her understanding of concepts, developed her language skills and creativity and stimulated her desire to learn about and explore the world.

Notably, though the students enjoyed the teaching and learning at the school, Wallace indicated that the school was very conservative and did not always accommodate new methods of learning. Citing an incident where the school rebuffed a teacher's methodology, Wallace narrated:

*I enjoyed Mr Vanpooler's lessons. He introduced a new, modern way of teaching. We would go outside into the field, sit in the sun and discuss things as a class. He had a*



*very casual approach to us, very friendly to all the students. He had a different approach to teaching; sitting outside, playing music in class. He basically allowed students not really to do as they please, but would not mind them talking. We all liked him. He made the lessons fun and different from the way we were normally taught, very structured, a very common way of doing things. We benefited a lot from his lessons. However, Victoria High, although it was very politicised and encouraged open thinking, had very strong control – it had heads of departments who wanted things done their way. They would say, ‘We don’t mind you teaching and encouraging critical thinking, but don’t come with the idea that you want to play reggae music in the class and discuss Bob Marley’s philosophy of life’, which was what Mr Vanpooler did. The management of the school felt he was very progressive and pushing unwarranted modern teaching approaches. We were very sad because Mr Vanpooler only lasted two years and was forced out of the school.*

Wallace states that he felt that the school was a bit inconsiderate in the case of Mr Vanpooler because Mr Vanpooler was innovative and open to new ideas and alternative ways of thinking and viewings things.

The students’ discourses have exhibited how the school taught them to consider every moment as a precious experience to learn something new and expand their understanding of what they already knew. They learnt to respect each other as they shared thoughts and understanding of concepts taught. Through peer teaching they learnt responsibility, confidence, organisation and planning. The teachers also inspired the students to learn, question and think critically about things often taken for granted. For instance, Noor before taking food from the fridge had to think about how the fridge operates. The students’ social capital and connection to the world was enhanced by the sessions they had with various professional experts invited by the school. In addition the students’ engagement with the world was influenced by the political awareness they received at Victoria High School as shown in the next section.

#### 7.4. ASSERTIVENESS AND POLITICAL AWARENESS

Victoria High school's pervading discourses promoted the political consciousness of the students. The discourses equipped the students with the background knowledge to know and understand their contexts, the vision to realise their potential to change their circumstances and the will to act and transform their future lives as intellectually, morally and socially responsible citizens. Explaining how his political awareness was nurtured at Victoria High Noor said:

*The policy the school pushed was not to make you subservient, but give you confidence to fight in the struggle against racism and apartheid. When I was at Victoria High I knew I wanted to study further, whether as a teacher or lawyer. Remember at that time you could only be a teacher or a nurse. Remember that was the time of apartheid and we could not even go to UCT, we needed a pass. There was no freedom of choice when going to university. You could not even think of going to Stellenbosch because it was the headquarters of Verwoerd, he was the custodian of apartheid. His policy was that if you are a black person you only qualify to do physical labour. You can't think, so you can't do Mathematics. Maths was not for a black person. You only do physical labour, carry stones. Verwoerd's office was in the Wilcocks Building at Stellenbosch University. The education department was started by Verwoerd and it is surprising that they take black people now. But what Victoria High taught us was to be confident and be proud of who we are, never look at ourselves with contempt.*

Besides the political lessons promoting his awareness, Noor explained these lessons developed in him the yearning to become a responsible citizen equipped to actively participate in propagating and engaging his community in ideas about democracy. The political lessons also instilled in him the desire to fight for social justice in his life at work, home and on the sport field. Elucidating his desire to exercise social justice, he noted:

*We were always challenging the law you see. If you are challenging the law and apartheid, don't you think you will be able to challenge the teacher and his authoritarianism as well or the principal, this was the type of students that we were at Victoria High. We challenged the law and the order of the day, and that made us resistance activists, to take up challenges. If you look at the Premier of Cape Town and*

*many of the leadership in the country that strive to make a difference, they all came from Victoria High.*

Mikaeel explained that in addition to political awareness, the school also developed his leadership qualities, expertise and autonomy to effectively work with people with diverse and often conflicting views and thinking. He remarked that:

*You know, when I look back to the time I was at school, I feel Victoria High was instrumental in setting up landmarks of many people's success as well as developing students that went on to occupy critical spaces. I think having gone through that experience at Victoria High had an important role to play in my life. It helped me to go on to occupy positions of authority in the new South Africa. But listen, there was nothing that was forced on you, it was an offering made unto you and it was up to you what to do out of the offering. There are a lot of people that went to Victoria High and chose not to be politically involved, you see. But the fact is that we were given an opportunity, an offering. So there was nothing dogmatic about that. And there wasn't a clear political line that was pushed at the school. It was more to deepen your understanding about education and also to contribute as a member of the society while at school and when you left school. So these are the things I feel Victoria High had an important role to play in my life.*

The students' views illustrate that their political consciousness was developed by the teachers' ability to link what they were taught to their political and social contexts. They found this very valuable as they could relate to what was happening around them. Linking learning to the students' political context as outlined by Mikaeel broadened their understanding and perspectives of the world, in addition to imbuing them with autonomy and a desire to advocate for change. Besides stimulating the students' political consciousness and leadership skills the teachers also promoted and nurtured the students to think critically about their environs and the world at large as outlined below.

## **7.5. CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN LIFE SITUATIONS**

The teachers encouraged the students to be active lifelong learners, who did not take things as given or for granted. The students were presented with practical situations and were

expected to figure out the lay of the land. They had to question, think through, evaluate and reconstruct their ideas and views constantly. Wallace highlighted that his teachers encouraged brainstorming, debates, group work, analysis and evaluation of texts, which made him critical of all his daily engagements and life experiences. These activities fostered his critical ability to make independent decisions and judgments. Wallace illustrates this by noting that:

*When I look at Victoria High it has life value and it was priceless and certainly in terms of shaping my world thinking, my perspectives of life. And not to say that it was the be all and end all because certainly from my political, economic and social perspective it certainly gave me an advantage of going to university later and specially being aligned with white students and their thoughts and realise that they were limited in terms of what was happening around the country – what life was about in different areas. We certainly had a wonderful awareness at Victoria High. I took away the art of critical thinking. Up to today I am that kind of a person that you don't just tell me something. If you tell me something then I would ask you, why are you telling me something? Why are you saying that I must do this? I just don't accept things for what they are. And I have taken that into my life as a parent as well. I like my children to challenge me. I like my children to ask me, why you did this.*

Furthermore, Wallace expressed his gratitude to Victoria High school for nurturing his critical eye and assertiveness to engage with basic daily routines and challenges. He recounted:

*I also learnt the need of the balance between my physical aspect of life and the intellectual aspect of life because you mustn't just be an intellectual person and neglect your physical side. I think at the school all of the teachers were very intellectual, into learning and teaching, but from our sports teacher I learnt that there must be a balance in your life. You should play sport and live a healthy lifestyle and you should feed your mind.*

Wallace also explained that in addition to physical fitness through sports he also learnt the importance of proficiency, self-assurance, good personality, compassion, intra- and inter-communication and relationships.

Likewise, Cheryl attested that her critical thinking and broader perspective of the world was developed at Victoria High. Demonstrating the school's emphasis on critical thinking, she said:

*I was taught don't accept things on face value always, dig deeper. Critical thinking is something that we were definitely taught and we can teach it. They were questions that were thrown at us which we would discuss. We were given the opportunity to argue in our writing. There was the school magazine as well, a school newspaper. The school taught us to think and never to accept the status quo and that always stays with me. If I'm not happy with something I always challenge it.*

Cheryl also explained that the school's promotion of critical thinking sharpened her reasoning capacity and her multi-faceted approach to life, as well as her confidence to express her views regardless of any criticism that she might receive from her workmates, church colleagues, family members or neighbours. She believes that she has learnt to value and respect herself and that this has given her the capacity to assert her voice and make independent decisions.

George indicated that he felt that he obtained a holistic education from Victoria High that has equipped him with various useful skills pertinent to his life. He explained that:

*I learnt a lot from the school; deep love for knowledge, for reading books, literature, love of ideas, debate, I love to argue about things. I was a debater and sometimes they would ask me to be a commentator and speak to the whole school. It was a highlight for me to speak to the whole school. It was great to be called to make announcements or be a commentator for about five minutes. Besides, I think the other special thing for me was the sport. I liked sport, it was a highlight for me and every year we had a competition where everybody participated. It was great fun. I was an athlete. I really liked that. In sports I learnt leadership and health routines through the sporting activities.*

George explicated that these academic and non-academic lifelong skills had enhanced his interactions with the public and given him confidence and authority in his lecturing, writing, speaking and various presentations that he is required to do.

Demonstrating how the school endeavoured to develop the students' critical thinking, Mr Walters said:

*The teaching was founded on the basis of using mathematics, not merely to work with numbers, but get children to think. I taught English and History, and certainly those were critical subjects to get children to think. So it wasn't merely literature for literature sake, but it was about disaggregating the setting of the literature towards getting the children to think.*

The students demonstrated that pedagogical practices supported their intellectual engagement and growth as they were taught how to draw abstract concepts from texts and apply them in their daily lives. This enhanced their ability to question and share ideas and knowledge which was useful in their learning and lives. Furthermore, the critical thinking the students learnt enabled them not only to tackle life situations, but also to question some of the policies and activities that the school embraced and engaged in as demonstrated below.

#### **7.6. CRITICALLY ENGAGING WITH THE SCHOOL PRACTICES**

This section illustrates how after embracing the critical thinking skills some of the students questioned the school's discourses of equality and social justice. The students refused to be silenced by a system that encouraged liberty, social justice and democratic citizenship. The students therefore advocated for a meaningful and practical application of social justice.

In contrast to most of the participants, who underlined how the pedagogical practices positively developed their various physical and cognitive skills, Antol explained that he was critical of the school's practices and learnt from what he thought were the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Describing his sentiments, he remarked:

*I had experiences at Victoria High that impacted enormously on me and that had an effect on the work that I had been doing. You know, once a child has gone through the gates of a school that child generally looks back at the school with pride. Importantly, Victoria High helped me to think seriously about life and about politics, although my strong focus on the political issue occurred before I went to Victoria High. However, I fundamentally object to the uneducational thinking at Victoria High. The fact is that they didn't focus on the needs of the individual child. They focused on the ethos of the school and if a child satisfied the needs of that ethos, that child shone at that school. They prioritised a particular aspect of a child and did not focus on the entire potential*

*of the child. If there was no connection between the child and the ethos of the school that child was regarded as stupid, dysfunctional and not contributing to the school, and those children will normally be children of those who were not in the rigorous academic stream.*

Antol explained that the failure of Victoria High to look at the individual student's needs have taught him to advocate for a child-centred education. He endeavours to ensure that every child gets all he or she requires to make learning realisable. Highlighting how he has taken this up in his profession and life he noted:

*The vilest story I can tell is that there were parents that enrolled their child who had cancer at the school. These parents informed the principal that their child had to go for treatment every fortnight. The principal said that as long as he kept his grades up it was ok. And in his very first year the child's grades dropped. The parents were called in and told the child failed at the end of that first year and they had to find him another school. The parents tried for a long time to keep the child at that school, tried to get the help of retired teachers at the school, to no avail. The parents were told to find him a new school.*

Antol thought the reaction of the principal was unbecoming. He explained that such an action is a clear indication of how the education system is missing the role that schools must perform in society. Schools are there to develop the students' talents, skills, thinking and opportunities in life to become good citizens. Antol further highlighted that schools are responsible for students' failures. Illustrating how schools lack of concern for students' schooling, he said:

*Many schools just call in the parents and say, listen here, your child has behaviour problems and you have to find your child a new school next year. Sometimes they slip that message in the final report card. This didn't happen at Victoria High. I'm not aware if it happened at Victoria High. But I was a student there over forty years ago now, so I don't know what they get up to when things are desperate. But other schools, other elite schools did it because I was a principal and I received children who had been rejected from other school because they were academically weak. Because even after coming from primary school with a good academic record, they started falling behind at high school. For whatever reason, those children were rejected.*

More so, Denford highlighted how the school's prime focus on academic subjects variously impacted on the students' learning, opportunities and lives. Illustrating this he noted:

*The school offered art as a subject, but the staff looked at it as a lesser subject. I was put in an academic class, but I wanted to do art, so I told them to move me to an art class. My friend Godwin and I asked to be moved to the art class, but the majority doing art were just put there. They were seen as having no academic potential. So they were just put into the woodwork class or art class – those were the two. I found myself in class with children with different abilities. Some of them struggled with art. I remember some of them really found it hard, you know, those children who lacked artistic abilities. I also think some of the teachers lacked an understanding of patience, so often when they were problematic children they placed them in arts classes, and of course there were problematic students at Victoria High.*

Denford explained that most of the students who were allocated to the Art class without an interest in studying Art felt demoralised and had a negative self-perception of themselves and their capacity to perform to the best of their potential. He suggested that the teachers should rather have allowed students to study subjects of their choice and assist them to overcome their difficulties.

Illustrating the significance of developing the students' diverse talents in school, Antol described his personal experiences with his two daughters. He noted:

*I have two children. When we were staying in Mitchell's Plain my first daughter was two years old. You see, then I was always gardening. I don't know if you know the flowers; Heliconias, are very colourful winter bulbous flowers. All sorts of colours, beautiful colours, yellow, pink, blue and so on. I then put on my knee in front of these blooms to check her reaction. And she very gingerly stretched out one hand and stroked the petals of one bloom and pulled her hand back. And two years later I did this with the second born, also a girl. She stretched out both hands, grabbed the bloom in each hand and ripped it off and crushed it. I could see these were to be two totally different children. I knew the education system would favour the first one and reject the other one because the other one doesn't fit into the ethos of the education system.*



Antol explained that this experiment enabled him to understand that his two daughters had different talents and abilities. Understanding from his schooling experience at Victoria High that the education system preferred academically talented children, Antol pointed out that he had to intervene in the education of his daughters so that their different talents were taken care of. Describing how he dealt with his two daughters Antol noted:

*The first-born, Antoinette, she had to be persuaded to switch off her lights and go and sleep because she would like to go on and on reading the books. The other one, Anastasia, we had to fight with her to open a book. When both of them went to Victoria High I was very worried about Anastasia, because she did not have a strong academic orientation. Antoinette passed matric with an 'A' pass, which means that universities reached out to try and get her come to their university. UCT gave her R10 000 yearly incentive to come and study there. So she went. When Anastasia went to Victoria High I told her, listen, this school has a strong academic orientation and you don't have a strong academic orientation and I said, what are you strong at because we need to focus on that. She said, 'Dance and netball', and I knew Victoria High was not strong in both. We were still staying in Mitchell's Plain, there are very strong sports leagues in Mitchell's Plain. You continue playing netball in Mitchell's Plain and I will take you to a dance company because at Victoria High dancing and netball were not very big. So we did that and she just slipped through every year, just managed to pass every year. When she came to matric and in the mean time I was saving money because I knew she was not going to get a bursary, alright, and if she passes she will just slip through. And then the place where she was dancing, Jazz Art, had a programme where they were going to select twenty children for a bursary. And Anastasia entered, the dancer entered. I remember the academic one, the elder one can't dance to save her life. She can't play netball. She is an academic and is a doctor now in medical research. She is in KZN doing research in HIV. The other one, Anastasia, even before she wrote her matric, she danced her way into a R20 000 a year bursary, double the money that the sister got who was an academic one. That was from a dance company and that is the way government should govern the education system.*

Antol also commented that he was happy that he did not stifle Anastasia's potential and ruin her future simply because she was not academically oriented.

Ironically, while Victoria High School developed the students' agency and autonomy in decision making, it expected its students to comply with the school rules. However, Antol's critical thinking allowed him to challenge the school authorities for being impostors - advocating for equality but failing to accommodate various students' opinions. Antol explained that he refused to be susceptible to the school structures that denied the students the opportunity to make independent, meaningful and useful decisions as competent, responsible and socially just citizens as the school advocated. The next section describes the students' reflection of their schooling experiences and juxtaposes them to their current perceptions of the educational systems and challenges.

### **7.7. DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: IS EDUCATION ACADEMIC ONLY?**

As shown in this dissertation, the fourteen students' views were deeply influenced by their individual schooling experiences at Victoria High. In response to their schooling experiences, this section presents the participants' suggestions to address the current educational dilemmas. Pondering on her schooling experiences at Victoria High Susan, a music lecturer at a local university in Cape Town, discussed her discomfort in the way her teachers expected all the music students to have the same tastes in music and play the same instruments. Describing her observations, she said:

*I think performance is a necessary part of music, but I do understand that not every musician wants to be a performer. You need the nerve to be a performer because you need to be very strong within yourself to do that. I did perform a bit at school but you know, the school overlooked the fact that performers aren't always extroverts, some are introverts. It is not necessarily about performing, music is a very personal involvement between you and the instrument and those of us who are more introverts we don't need to perform for others. And now I do not expect all my students to be good performers because individuals have different skills and interests.*

Susan further explained that her role as a music teacher is to identify the musical interest of the students and to devise ways to assist the students to excel in their area of choice. She has learnt that students grasp concepts better when they have an interest in what they learn.

Elucidating his disappointment in an education system that only focuses on the academic aspect of learning, Antol explains his views on the education system in South Africa:

*The problem that we have in the South African education system is that the goal is to get children to pass the exams, that's silly. What they don't know is that the national minister, the head of education in the province, the bureaucracy that controls education, gives the principals the power to get the children pass the exam and that is what is happening now. They have lowered standards so that they can fulfil the goal of South African standards to have children pass exams. The tragedy is that children do pass the exams, but still know nothing. Because you see, if the national minister says, 'The pass rate must go up', it will go up. I was on the exam board, you can manipulate the raw scores, you know the percentages and so on, you can change subject choices, you can change pass marks, which is what is being done.*

Antol further indicated that the tenacious focus on academic education encourages forms of obnoxious moral decay. Explaining this, he remarked:

*You can see that the school was about academics and that is the problem that I have with the education system today. It is about marks, it is about targets. Schools must get targets. They must score this and that. It's all about marks and we can get the children to get their 80%, 90% in History. You could do it in a thousand ways, you know, telling your students: study that, do that, leave out that, you can get your 100% passes; get all your children through the exam, but that's not education.*

Contrary to Antol's perspective on the academic focus of the school, Mr Walters explained that at Victoria High academic marks were required, but were not the primary focus of the school. What was crucial was the cognitive development of the students and a development of their citizenry. He clarified:

*Victoria High's focus was different to the Department's pathological insistence on marks. We had to get the marks, but from a totally different approach. It wasn't a fanatical thing, just get the marks, it was getting children to think, and then they can think and get the marks. It wasn't about marks, but about getting children to think critically via Mathematics, via Chess Club, Debate Club, via History, and that thinking*

*resulted in the marks. So it was a different approach than you see nowadays and I must say I was encouraged by that. You know, I can quote a number of ex-students who are professors at different universities, the world round. It's quite interesting, there is a unit at UCT – the School Development Unit, and I know that a number of our teachers and ex-teachers are running that unit or functioning in that unit. So that is very encouraging. One of my students just informed me last year that he has been appointed Principal in New Zealand, Maurice School, which is Art. But you can go anywhere and you will find our teachers and students, just amazing.*

Mr Walters further outlined that the primary purpose of education should be to produce reasoning and competent individuals who can transform their circumstances and those of society. He indicated that the country will remain ineffectual if the citizens cannot take responsibility and authority for their learning. Abigail concurred with Mr Walters that the education at Victoria High gave the students the wings to fly in different directions. Elucidating this, she noted:

*The skills we learnt from Victoria High School were tremendous. It made every student adapt to various situations easily. In fact, Victoria High students excel wherever they go. When I went to visit my son in New Zealand I met students from Victoria. When I visited the Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Netherlands and Sydney, I met Victoria High students in high professions; one of them assisted me at the Denmark embassy and another on my flight back to South Africa.*

Similarly, Noor explained that the school offered a holistic education that propelled students to excel in their areas of choice and ability. He noted:

*The school inspired me and I would like to believe that it was not just me. I was there from 1977 to 1981, and all my brothers, sisters and relatives attended Victoria High, so Victoria High is deep in our blood. But then, I went to other schools and I found that there were dedicated students at Lotus High. I went to Lovedale High and I found the principal dedicated and I asked him, 'Where are you from?', and he said, he is from Victoria High. I met some top administrators in sport and I asked them, 'where are you from?', and they said, 'from Victoria High'. And wherever you go, you see a Victorian. I'm proud that I attended the school, but I also caution myself not to be so proud that*

*I think it was better than all the other schools. It gave us good introduction to politics, you see, awareness.*

The students' views have shown how the school practices both positively and negatively impacted on the students learning. Positively, the school equipped the students with skills that made them confident and versatile in various sectors of their chosen occupation. Negatively, the academic discourses of the school, and failure to cater for the individual talents of students inadequately prepared them for their future occupations and lives. The next section provides another perspective on how participants viewed education.

## **7.8 WAY FORWARD IN EDUCATION**

This section provides the participants reflections of their educational experiences at Victoria High and how these challenged them to think about and engage with education in their current occupations. Mr Walters explained his concerns regarding the role of the teacher and resources in schools. He felt that schools tend to neglect the key role that teachers play and focus too much on acquiring resources that can't take the place of a teacher. Highlighting this perspective, he said:

*I have worked for the National Department of Implementation at one stage and have visited different schools in different provinces. I can tell even in the mud schools of the Eastern Cape, you can get excellence. So what is it that makes a teacher in a mud school in the Eastern Cape get children to read better than urban children? No resources, no wi-fi phones, no electronic tablets and what not. I believe that if you have a dedicated, competent teacher, it's your greatest asset. You can have your white board and I have seen it, white boards and all that, those things only work well with good teachers. In the hands of poor teachers they are useless. That is why I am saying that teachers are a tremendous resource for children, not only in terms of knowledge, but motivation as well. I believe that resources are important, make no mistake they are important, but they are only beneficial in the hands of a good teacher. In the hands of a poor teacher they are useless, because there is no resource that can take over the role of a teacher.*

Substantiating the often taken-for-granted, significant role of teachers Mr Walters explained:

*Still on the question of resources, there is a Mitchell's Plain school that had 100% pass rate. This is a deprived area, right, but has done exceptionally well. It's not that they have the best of buildings and what not. So I am very sceptical about the question of resources without the human agency that must manage those resources. If there is not a dedicated human agent, an agent of change, those resources mean nothing. I have seen it in some schools where there are electronic white boards and the teacher doesn't know how to use them. The teacher had pictures stuck on the electronic board, I could have cried, so what is the point in having that? You need an informed committed human agent that would manage the resources. If that is not there you are wasting your time.*

On another note, Abigail indicated that the education system should also consider what people require and equip the students with the necessary and relevant skills. She remarked:

*Why don't we have agricultural colleges in this country to which students will go? Colleges to give skills that are useful, such as planting vegetables and so on. And the people who come out of these colleges can then be drafted into farms. These are my ideas of how we can overcome the agricultural problem. And it can be done if only people were aware of it. For instance, myself, I am busy with a farming cooperative where we have a number of women. Government has said 'if you are a number of women, three or four, and want to form a cooperative, we will give you money to do so.' We are waiting for them to give us money, but now it seems they are bankrupt.*

Also highlighting his sentiments of what schools should concentrate on, Antol noted:

*Education has to do with developing the child's potential and not turning around saying this is an academic school, if you come to this school you must perform academically, it's wrong, the child must be at the centre of the school. You must look at the child's ability and increase that ability. If the child doesn't have certain abilities try to inject, create that for the child. And when you look at the child as an individual, then you are able to help the child. Instead of rejecting the child and look at the child as if he is going to sabotage the rich history of the school. Basically, what I am saying is that the school exists for the child and not the other way round. That is the problem Victoria High had. At Victoria High the child exists for the school. The school selects the*

*children who can come into the school because of their strong academic orientation. Then secondly they select the children who are to be taught at the school and place their school first. Then the child exists for the school and not the other way round. The problem is that when you have the school first and then the child, in other words if the child exists to fulfil the ethos of the school, then you have the type of anti-education practices that exist today at these schools. When the school realises that the child is not academically strong, they try to get rid of the child. They deregister the child and in many cases it's very easy, because the child who is academically weak - is the same child who has behaviour problems. And so you use the behaviour problem, to eject the child.*

The students above demonstrated that the learning that they obtained from Victoria High was deep-seated in their thinking, engagement and perspective. Learning to them, was supposed to have form and meaning in the lives of students. Thus, as they became adults they became critical of what learning should do, that is, to transform the thinking and actions of people.

## **7.9 CONCLUSION**

The chapter argued that pedagogical practices fundamentally created the learning environment and influenced the way the students experienced their schooling and were thereby able to acquire transposable capital. It highlighted that the readings that the students were exposed to framed their aspirations, imaginations, decisions, reasoning and the nature of the effort they exert. Furthermore, the teachers connected learning to the students' contexts enabling their familiarisation with the content, an understanding and recollection of concepts taught and an acquisition of new knowledge. More so, linking learning to the political, social and economic contexts developed the students' awareness, agency, sense of social justice and transformation. The students learnt to question, and this in turn nurtured their critical thinking, autonomy and self-concept.

In addition, the chapter has demonstrated that using practical examples in teaching as well as actively engaging students in the learning process holds the potential to boost their capacity to think as it enables them to make visual connections to the relevance of what they

learn. Importantly, the school underscored the value of learning in all the students' activities beyond the confines of the four walls of the classrooms. The students learnt through films, drama, debate clubs, and peer teaching. These activities stimulated the students to foster a spirit of life-long learning, creativity, innovativeness, reasoning, respect for others, confidence and a sense of self-worth. Notably, the chapter illustrated that what the students learnt at school became embedded in their lives. The students in their various occupations (long after they left the school) continued to think deeply about the importance of education in changing the thinking and circumstances of people. What they learnt from Victoria High enabled them to question the current educational system's focus on academic excellence and results at the detriment of identifying the students' needs, and nurturing their individual talents, liberal thinking and citizenry.

The next chapter uses the theories of Bourdieu, Fraser and Freire to analyse how the school's learning culture and pedagogical practices influenced the students' identity, thinking, aspirations, choices, opportunities and lives.



## CHAPTER 8: THE POWER OF SCHOOLING CULTURES AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

### 8.1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter employs the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire and Nancy Fraser to analyse the participants' perceptions of their learning experiences at Victoria High and how these nurtured three elements of transposable capital: reflexivity, engagement and deliberation respectively that shaped their thinking, perspective of the world, choices, aspirations, opportunities, preferences, identities and lives. The previous chapters highlighted how the learning experiences of the students were framed by the school's context and its intersection with the historical, political, social and economic conditions of the country. The political stance and discourses of the school influenced and positioned the students to think differently of themselves, others and their future. It developed communal thinking and civic engagement, a desire to fight for social justice, and courage to share their views irrespective of opposition. Furthermore, the students engaged with politics at different levels in relation to the political tendencies they embraced as well as the specific political moments during their various years they were at Victoria High. The school also emphasised the value of education in changing the thinking and prospects of the students. Thus, in all their engagements at the school, both academic and non-academic, the students obtained knowledge, skills and dispositions that were invaluable in their lives.

The pedagogical practices employed by the school engaged the students in the learning process, enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning. This active involvement enabled the students to make the knowledge and skills that they had learnt more meaningful, useful and applicable. The teachers' pedagogical practices also underscored the importance of education in transforming the students' reasoning, opportunities and livelihoods. The teachers endeavoured to be good role models of punctuality, commitment, discipline, diligence, carefulness, organisation, preparedness, cooperativeness, citizenry, responsibility, insightful thinking and knowledgeability. The teachers' professionalism, some students attested, developed their self-concepts, self-worth, confidence, competency, imagination, agency, identity, critical thinking and interaction with various people in the different stages of their learning, adulthood and life. However, other students indicated that some of the teachers' practices demotivated and jeopardised their career choices and future prospects.

This chapter uses Bourdieu's theory of capitals, field, habitus, symbolic violence, social reproduction and agency to provide an understanding of how the students' social backgrounds and the teaching and learning experiences at Victoria High shaped their thinking, decision making, prospects, and encounters with various challenges in their lives.

Freire's theory of critical pedagogy is used to analyse how the types of educational practices can either develop the students' critical thinking, reasoning, and agency or promote docility, laziness, apathy and insipidness. Critical pedagogy is also useful in examining the relevance and effect of connecting teaching and learning to students' contexts and daily life experiences.

The chapter also employs Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice to examine how the students were able to resist and repel conditions of inequity. Fraser's notion of social justice also assists in scrutinising how the distribution of resources and knowledge, recognition (of the racial, cultural, gender, social class) and representation (through various sports, social clubs and welfare societies) shape what and how the students learnt.

The following section evaluates the school's notions of social class and how it shaped the learning experiences, rationalities and realities of the students.

## **8.2. SOCIAL POSITIONING**

Victoria High, as a 'field' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:108), followed 'specific logics' that distinguished it from other schools. It took a political stance, which determined the atmosphere and the general engagements in the school. The political stance of the school was initiated when the community, teachers and parents demanded that the state open a school for their children. The school has continued to endeavour to offer its students an education that would break all forms of inequality. All the teachers employed at Victoria High were informed of the particular 'rules of the game' at the school, namely developing the students' critical thinking. Highlighting this, Mr September explained how once teachers were appointed at the school they were urged to work hard and failure to comply with the standards expected by the school was not tolerated. He pointed out that:

*You were to take ownership of the school and if something goes wrong when you are at the helm of the school then, history will blame you. So you had that load with you when you take responsibility at Victoria High to maintain those standards.*

Key to the ethos at Victoria High was breaking the inequality barriers in education. Most of the students came from working-class families. For instance, as outlined in the previous chapters Patricia was uncomfortable to come to school on civvies (informal dress) day because she did not have decent clothes. George and Henry also felt uncomfortable because their English grammar was poor. However, Victoria High cared for the students and underscored how education was a vehicle to enable them to move out of their poverty and change their various circumstances. The intellectual capital that the participants describe as receiving from Victoria High enabled them to become professionals. This depicts how social class is not static and individuals have the power and capabilities to transform and achieve social class. This resonates with Ball's (2006:8) suggestion that individuals in certain situations achieve their class positions via forms of mobility that are both contingent and strategically dependent on their access to assets and different forms of capital.

The students were motivated to challenge their social class disadvantages when they were made aware of the relationship between their social positions and possible lifestyles that required them to anticipate probable and realistic educational and occupational outcomes for themselves (Marjoribanks, 2002). Thus, Victoria High empowered the students to overcome their social difficulties, raised their aspirations and changed their thinking about their future lives.

At Victoria High the students were equipped with middle-class values such as language and aspirations to support their move into their professional careers. Most of the students aspired to go to university and to occupy key positions in various professional sectors. In this regard Aronson, Fried and Good (2002) argue that class stigma can be reduced significantly when a teacher encourages students to see intelligence as a malleable capacity increased by effort and learning, rather than a fixed capacity measured by performance.

### 8.3. OVERCOMING SOCIAL CLASS BARRIERS

Although, Bourdieu (1974), via his social reproduction theory, argues that schools and teachers aid and abet the family-based reproduction process by rewarding the possession of elite cultural capital in students and by setting elitist standards rigged to favour upper- and middle-class children and exclude others, this was not the case at Victoria High. The school enrolled students from various social backgrounds and encouraged its students not to differentiate between each other along the lines of social class. Noor, coming from a working-class family, describes how the school supported him to achieve and constantly reminded him and others from working-class families to work hard in order to transform their future lives. Noor noted that:

*Victoria High taught us that you are equal or better, but never worse. So it was that spirit of Victoria High that strengthened most of us for the future.*

As Ortner (2003) notes, the school regarded education as the ladder to carry the students out of their working class social status. The motivation and intellectual capital that Noor and his friends received from Victoria High enabled them to become professionals, exhibiting that social class is not static. Individuals have the power and capabilities to transform and move into another or higher social class.

As most of the students came from working-class homes the school endeavoured to expose the students to middle-class values. They were urged to read extensively. To overcome the shortage of textbooks at the school, the students were encouraged to make use of the public library or to circulate books among themselves. George proudly noted:

*Because I studied at UCT, I qualified to study overseas. I studied in America and I got my PhD there at John Hopkins, which is one of the top universities in the place called Baltimore. My younger brother went to Oxford University.*

Similarly, Denford and Hellene explained that though they came from poor homes and often felt inferior, Victoria High, through its attitude to mitigating social class, taught them the value of confidence and self-worth, which enabled them to overlook their inadequacies. Victoria High gave the students an education that refuted Bourdieu's (1974:32) assertion that "education is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social

pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one". Contrary to this, Victoria High used education as a means of addressing the impact of the social class related inequalities that had beset its students.

The teachers developed the students' reading and studying dispositions which provided them the 'generative capacity' to work harder and excel academically. These reading and studying dispositions also changed the students' thinking, imagination, actions, frame of mind, determination to change their circumstances and choices to act in certain ways and not others. The school's philosophy and song constantly reminded the students that they had the capacity to excel and must not allow anything to impede their progress. Exemplifying this Mr September said:

*The motto of the school is Nula Vestigia Retrorsum, and this is Latin and it means no step back. So everything is caught up in this. The final verse is Victoria High advance, advance there must always be progress. The meaning of Victoria is you must strive in the community to be a living stone, you must be alive, like in the Bible the weakest stone has become the corner stone. You had to become a living stone and not a dead stone.*

As outlined in the school's song, the students were encouraged to be optimistic, hardworking, and adventurous, and confidently connect and impact the world.

#### **8.4. GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE WORLD**

Victoria High's discourses underscored the significance of an education that promoted the students' awareness, critical thinking, responsible citizenry and ability to transform the world. The school connected the students to the outside world through reading, field trips, films and discussions. In guidance lessons, the school invited many people from different professions to come to talk to the students so as to connect them with the outside world. Mr Swartz explained that the school invited experts in various fields to motivate the students to work hard and show them that opportunities were open for them. He explained that:

*The school had a policy where ex-students who had succeeded in some or other fields addressed the Grade 12 students before they left the school. Often there were special assemblies where the entire school was addressed as well. To see these successful young men or women and hear them relate the extent of the school's influence on their growth and success and hear them impart this knowledge, was heart-warming and very affirming.*

Mr Swartz believed that such sessions were quite inspiring to students as they observed former students occupying various positions of authority in different fields. The sessions also gave the students opportunities to ask questions and in this manner provided the students with the intellectual and social capital to consider their future careers from an informed position. In this respect, Coleman (1988) highlights the usefulness of social capital as part of a potential solution for marginalised students, as it enables them to look beyond their present circumstances. Coleman (1988:104-105) highlights that social capital is important as it is a source of useful everyday norms and sanctions which can facilitate certain kinds of actions. In particular, he notes that social capital plays a significant role in the creation of human capital, such as a secure sense of self-identity, confidence in expressing one's own opinions, and emotional intelligence, all of which enable young people to become better students and to be more successful in school and in society.

The students at Victoria High were also encouraged to work in teams and this resulted in the creation of strong and permanent friendships and relationships. Most of the students highlighted that they had maintained their friendships from school and that they kept in touch with others, updating each other of their recent challenges and successes. Discussing how he communicated actively with his classmates, Wallace said,

*... we do have a close connection network with my former school mates. I see my friends I went with to school on a regular basis. We have class gatherings and reunions. Our last get together was last week and we had another one a week before. And now and again we take weekends away together.*

Wallace believed this unity was developed at Victoria High through the teachers' emphasis on the significance of team work. They were encouraged to work in groups, share ideas and assist one another.

Likewise, Patricia and Antol indicated that their matriculant classes met once every year and reflect on how Victoria High helped them to overcome their social inequalities. Some students like Susan, however, did not maintain friendship with many people. In this regard, Devine (2009) notes that participation in valued social networks depends on the individual's ability to present him/herself as 'competent', or having the 'mutual dispositions' of the norms of the governing social group. Also underscoring the significance of the enduring friendships of the students at school, Reynolds (2007:386) suggests that friendships offer a "sense of self" and "important aspects of personality".

The participants believed that the social networks created by the school broadened their understanding of the world and supported them to overcome challenges. The awareness programmes organised by the school enlightened them about the job opportunities available and what it entailed to be employees in the various job sectors. The discussions with the former students of the school also motivated and instilled in some of the participants a sense of worth, agency and optimism to excel in their schooling. Besides, to better prepare the students for their future careers the school streamed the students into different classes according to their subject expertise as demonstrated below.

## 8.5. SUBJECT ALLOCATIONS

Endeavouring to promote students competence and excellence in their schooling, Victoria High streamed its students into sciences, commercial and art classes. The students however, had a different perception of the streaming and how this impacted on their learning, potential, identity and lives. Henry was dismayed by the streaming policy of Victoria High and felt the distinction divided the students into two distinct groups, the academic group and the other more general group. He said that:

*The academics were the clever people and were in their own class and the generals were the not so clever people and they had ninety six in their own class. I was in the generals and we didn't mix with the academics and the academics didn't mix with us so easily.*

He thought the streaming system was highly segregative as it penetrated all the activities of the school both within and outside the classroom. Elucidating this he noted:

*One could distinguish the generals from the academic by looking at the extracurricular activities that the students engaged in. Most of the academic classes were in the drama club, magazine club, debate club and a few sports. The students who did the physical things will be the general classes. This distinction was there and nobody talked about it. It was how people think; for instance, chess was played by academic people, you will not see a general guy saying he wants to play chess; he would go to play soccer. The whole idea was we all belong to a school but you could see the different streams engaging differently.*

Henry was very uncomfortable with the categorisation of these two groups as he thought it resulted in stigmatisation. These stigmas, according to him, persisted after they left school. When there were occasions, like their reunions, parties or funerals, the two groups still remained separate. Such disparities, Henry felt, thwarted the students in the general classes to exert effort in their work, thus predetermining their future prospects as menial labourers. On the other hand, the confidence that the students who attended the academic classes had, motivated them to do well and proceed to occupy positions of authority.

From Henry's perspective, this streaming at the school could be considered a form of symbolic violence. In this regard, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) view schools as conserving rather than liberating kinds of institutions that effectively perpetuate the existing social structure in that they promote those students who enter equipped with cultural privileges and progressively eliminate others whose cultural capital differs significantly from that of the dominant group

Henry also thought that the teachers implicitly indicated to the students in the general classes that they would not proceed to university, and he felt that this often prevented these students from embracing the necessary scholarly attitudes and/or exerting sufficient effort in their work. Thus, Henry was not surprised that most of the students in the general classes, like himself became manual labourers. In this respect, Bourdieu (1984) highlights how schools perpetuate the social reproduction of inequalities by excluding certain students and imposing meanings of life on them. Bourdieu also suggests how some teachers employ pedagogic actions that are symbolically violent as they seek to impose arbitrary cultural meanings in the context of an arbitrary power relation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Thus, Bourdieu (1974:42)



comments, “by its own logic the educational system can help to perpetuate cultural privileges without those who are privileged having to use it”.

Similarly, Denford felt the streaming at Victoria High was twofold. However, for him the streaming worked well. He was placed in the Art class and was happy because he had an innate passion for art, which was further developed by the school. Today he is an artist and designer. However, he did feel that the streaming did not work for other students. Some of the students who were not academic and not artistically capable were also placed in the Art class. This was often difficult for the teachers because they had to deal with students with different potentials and attitudes. Such an approach disadvantaged the students because they were neither academically capable nor did they possess artistic skills. In this respect, Bourdieu (1974) notes how, by treating working-class children similarly to middle-class children, teachers maintain inequality and doubly punish the students, as they lack the dominant culture to begin with. Teachers measure and evaluate students on set standards. Since these standards are believed to neither be ‘fair’ and ‘objective’, neither parents or children doubt their legitimacy. Likewise, Roland and his friends refused the academic streaming and went to the Art stream. He explained:

*It was in matric when two of my friends and I spearheaded a social deviation at that point in time. We decided to stand up to the social stigma that Grade 10B had opposed to the Grade 10A class. Generally we were all matriculants but 10A would have come through the academic stream and 10B would have come through the general stream or semi- academic stream class. As a delegation we felt we didn’t want to be in the academic class, we wanted to go to the general class and we felt that the social classification in the school was something we could not support. That in the sense was standing up to the deputy, Mr Davids. And I remember going and he made us sit down; the three of us. I think probably at that time for whatever reason he didn’t insist that we stay in the class. He respected the fact that we had made up our minds on the decisions and reasons and I think in his mind it was more, the hidden agenda was to be with our friends I think he saw it as an opportunity for us to use our initiative in this matter.*

Roland's determination to refuse the subject allocation depicts how the working-class have the potential to refute the social reproduction inequality. Illustrating this, Willis (1978) provides a rich ethnography of how children experience contradictions and tensions in the dominant ideology. Willis (1978:119) describes how a group of working-class children, 'the lads', not only did not accept the dominant ideology, but actually developed antagonistic strategies in what he describes as "counter-school culture". He shows that the importance of these strategies is not known in any theoretical or conscious sense, but is expressed in working-class-specific visual, stylistic and behavioural forms. This is to say that there are actual, however diffusely expressed, resistances to the imposition of the dominant culture, which are rooted in the dominated culture. In these interactions there are moments when children catch a glimpse of their real position at the bottom of the social structure. But these 'penetrations' are never more than impulses, since they always encounter limitations, i.e. "those blocks, diversions, and ideological effects which confuse and impede the full development and expression of these impulses" (Willis, 1978:119). According to Willis (1977) these acts of defiance presuppose agency and a cultural realm different from the dominant one. But, while the rejection of the school's ideology is evidence of 'resistance', it also affirms the status and role of the dominated, which finds its logical conclusion in the neat insertion into manual labour.

Victoria High developed some students' relevant dispositions and thinking in line with the jobs they were to take up. Implicitly, it also gave other students resistant capitals to exercise their agency. Thus the teachers' professional conduct influenced the students learning experiences, identity, aspirations and lives in key ways as illustrated below.

## **8.6. PATTERNED LIVES**

Victoria High discourses considered the teachers fundamental in developing the characters, aspirations, thinking, worldly outlook and knowledge of students. The teachers were expected to be exemplary in all their conduct both within and outside the school. It was believed that this would provide the expected standard that the students had to follow. Illustrating how some of his teachers became his role models because of their audacity, commitment and inspiration, Roland noted that:

*I valued my teachers. I think I took something out of each of them. Probably from a few of them I would say. I had a good physical education teacher when it came to rugby, he was a great supporter. He was a lower grade English teacher and I think very much in terms of value, he was closer to the students, and I think by virtue of being a physical education teacher, especially with boys, he was a good rugby player. He taught us to be tough, you know, to handle those situations with limited resources. Certainly he was a role model to me.*

Similarly, depicting the commitment, inspiration and motivation of the teachers George said:

*We had amazing teachers who were committed and they set very high standards. They lived by example and you could take any of the teachers and say I would like to be like that person. We had amazing teachers who were committed and they set very high standards. There was no such thing that if you get 50% you have passed and that's good enough. No, that was a disgrace.*

Roland and George note that their imaginations and worldly outlook were influenced by their teachers who they highly esteemed and who critically shaped their identity. In this regard Bandura (1986) outlines how role-modelling is one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes and patterns of thought and of influencing students' career choices and lives. Notably, the teachers at Victoria High provided the students with different role models for them to follow.

Most of the interviewed students indicated that they looked up to their different teachers as their role models. Furlong and Biggart (1999) outline how students often consider the adults in their lives as role models that determine their sense of worthiness. The teachers tend to be the adults who influence the students' lives most because students spend most of their time at school. The participants attested to the fact that their teachers' passion, subject expertise, commitment, competence, knowledge, skills, diligence and courage, among other characteristics, encouraged them to become teachers.

Highlighting how the teachers became his role models, Mikaeel noted that *"the teachers gave you wings to take off in whatever way you wanted and that, I think, contributed to the success that the students went on to achieve"*. Likewise, Cheryl explained:

*I think my teachers were role models in different ways. Most of my teachers were really hard working. The work that was handed in would be marked. They had a good work ethic and I think this was important at the school. We didn't have teachers being frequently absent from school. We didn't have teachers coming to class unprepared, the kinds of things you hear about today in schools. So many of them offered different traits, as it were, which I think helped to mould me as a student and as a person at the school.*

The thinking, imagination, aspirations, preferences and identity of students to a considerable extent is influenced by the nature of the role models they have. Students may look up to their teachers, parents, siblings, television celebrities, sport stars or prominent international activists as their models. Regardless of their choice, role models serve as key sources of motivation, hope and encouragement for them to attain the kinds of goals they set for themselves or are set for them.

The above discussion has displayed the key influence teachers as role models had in the students' learning and lives. The students learnt not solely from what the teachers said, but from what they did, how they taught, what they taught, their knowledge of the subject content, the standards and expectations they set, their skills and the positive attitudes they displayed. Notably, what they taught and the standards and the expectations they established were influenced by how they interpreted and implemented the prescribed curriculum as discussed in the following section.

## **8.7. LEARNING WITH A DIFFERENCE**

Victoria High discourses rejected teaching practices that stifled the critical thinking and independence of students. To accomplish this, the teachers provided the students the opportunity to critically engage with the prescribed curriculum which in their opinion denied the students the opportunity to exercise their agency. Thus, by critically engaging with the curriculum the students were exposed to different learning practices that framed their thinking, perspectives, aspirations and opportunities. Highlighting how the school did not blindly implement the formal apartheid-based curriculum Miss Daniels said:

*The curriculum of the day was a Christian nationalist curriculum which did not give the students the opportunity to engage. The syllabus pushed on the students gutter education that impeded the students' thinking. Personally as a teacher I always felt it my duty to instil in the children the value of what it means to be equal and to understand themselves and that has always been my message.*

This, she hoped, catered for the students' diversity as well as accorded the students the opportunity to do well and increase their chances of proceeding to universities.

Critically engaging with the syllabus enabled the school to realise that the prescribed syllabus was not demanding, thus they could still teach it and have time to teach other things which they felt were of greater benefit to the students' future lives. In this regard, Mr Walters explained:

*We had the prescribed state curriculum. It was only examined at JC level, that is junior certificate level, and then at senior certificate. So we had to prepare children for those exams. The broad curriculum was not a heavy one. It was not strongly focused on Maths and Science. The History was interesting because the history of the time, it was the history of the apartheid government up to Grade 11. We in fact created our own syllabus. Obviously at Grade 12 they had to write an external examination, it was then that we followed the departmental syllabus that final year because we realised that these children must pass. It's an entry into the future so we couldn't be foolish about that. While we subversively taught them other stuff we also prepared them for the external exam in that final year. So it was that kind of management of the curriculum that became very important.*

Fundamentally, the teachers did not merely transfer their subject knowledge to the students to be memorised. The students were encouraged to understand the subject content, discern the relevance of the knowledge in order to apply it to life situations. The learning process was inspiring and empowering. The students learnt to be responsible and in control of what they learn and be in a position to apply it to their lives. Highlighting Freire's theory of critical pedagogy, McLaren and (1993:24) argue that such a pedagogy

... challenges teachers and students to empower themselves for social change, to advance democracy and equality as they advance their literacy and knowledge. His critical methods ask teachers and students to question existing knowledge as part of the questioning habits appropriate for citizens in a democracy.

Furthermore, Leonard and McLaren (1993:24) advocate employing critical pedagogy, which enables teachers to reject methods which make students passive and anti-intellectual. Freirian educators are encouraged to pose critical problems to students, treat them as complicated, substantial human beings and encourage curiosity and activism about knowledge and the world in order that students are enabled to take control of what they learn.

The students also highlighted that the teachers went beyond simply teaching subjects but used teaching methods and techniques that encouraged them to think and reason. Patricia explaining how Mr Davids probed her to think:

*He questioned in a critical way. If you say this chair is blue he would want you to say why you think the chair is blue? Why are you not saying its navy blue or so on? You know, he questioned you very deeply about every statement you made. He showed you the importance of justifying what you say. So if you say this table is round what references are you providing for such a statement –it had a diameter, a circumference and so on.*

The students also attested to the fact that they were privileged to have teachers that provoked them to think unlike other black schools in South Africa at that time which promoted authoritarian teacher roles – where teachers did most of the talking, with little engagement in their learning initiated by the pupils and most of the pupil responses taking the form of group chorusing (Coleman, 1996:21). Victoria High thought such styles suppressed the creativity, intuitiveness and assertiveness of students (Schlemmer & Bot, 1986; Thembela, 1986). Freire (1978:45) considers such stifling pedagogical practices as a banking form of education, which discourages students from developing their rational, imaginative or creative capabilities, operating to naturalise reality and ‘domesticate’ students. Victoria High promoted a critical liberal type of education through the use of critical pedagogy so as to engage the students in the lessons and enhance their deeper understanding of the subjects

taught. The students demonstrated that they were empowered with various skills, both academic and non-academic, that made them critically analyse their situations and exert their best efforts to climb to greater heights in their professions and lives. What Victoria High did resonates with the perspective that “social life has to be understood in terms that do justice both to objective and material, social, and cultural structures and to the constituting practices and experiences of individuals and groups” (Calhoun *et al.*, 1993:3). To enhance the students’ in-depth understanding of the different subjects, the teachers used various stimulating and engaging teaching methods. Bransford, Brown and Cocking (1999) depict how students learn more effectively in the active and cooperative learning environments created by the school which promote critical thinking. In his critical pedagogy, Freire (1978) suggests that an imposed curriculum obstructs the democratic and critical development of students.

Importantly, critically engaging with the curriculum exposed the students to learning practices that empowered them to think positively about themselves, developed their assertiveness, responsibility and citizenry. The following section describes the learning practices that were employed to practically involve the students and connect them to the knowledge creation.

#### **8.8. CULTIVATING THE CREAM OF THE CROP**

To proliferate its discourses of competence and excellence, Victoria High broadened the students’ desire for knowledge and understanding of the world. Debating was one of the learning practices that stimulated the students’ rationality and confidence to contribute to the society. During allocated teaching times, the teachers set up debate topics that accorded the students the opportunity to argue, reason and appreciate other people’s opinions. The school also had a debate club, where the students would thoroughly research and intellectually engage with current affairs, public affairs and academic discussions that empowered them to think deeply about their roles to bring about social change. Highlighting this, Mikaeel noted:

*One of the debates at that time was whether South Africa should be called Azania. It was a fierce debate. Some highlighting why it had to be called Azania and others why it should not be called Azania.*

Importantly, such vigorous debates encouraged the students to imagine and think deeply and analytically about what was happening around them, and how their decisions and choices would influence the kinds of the future lives that they were to lead. The debates empowered the students to embrace challenges on an informed level. Freire (1970) believes that, once a person has perceived and understood challenges and recognised the possibilities of a response, that person will act and the nature of his or her action will correspond to the nature of his or her understanding. Hence, a critical understanding of situations enables one to engage in critical action (Nyirenda, 1996:6). Furthermore, Ziegelmueeller and Dause (1975:4) claim that by debating, “individuals can be assisted in their efforts to make important decisions and in their efforts to convince others of the wisdom of those decisions”.

The students and the teachers at Victoria High also took part in debates about the nature of education and politics at that time. Illustrating this Mr Walters noted:

*When the University of the Western Cape was opened, there was a debate because the first intention of that university was to serve a particular group of people. It was a coloured university and there was a heavy debate as to whether we should boycott that because it was giving credence to the intentions of the state. So that was a major debate which caused lots of tensions and discussions among the staff, but in the light of where else to go to, many of us including myself conceded that they have to go there, do what you have to do; under protest, get your qualification and get out. Some decided we will go there and we will not graduate at the graduation ceremony, so there were a lot of tensions around that and you will understand these difficult decisions.*

The controversial debates motivated the teachers to critically think about the consequences of their decisions on the students’ lives. Tumposky (2004:52) argues that debate enables “the analysis of both sides of an argument, encouraging participants to step outside their personal frame of reference and become aware of their own thinking”. More so, debating broadened the students’ perspective of the world, thinking, analysis, independence and agency.

Freire (1970:43) considers that dialogical encounters significantly assist students to “develop critical consciousness of social, political, and economic contradictions so that they can take action against them”. Furthermore, Kincheloe (1991) suggests that through debating and



arguing students and teachers cultivate their own sense of agency and work to transform the world around them. Similarly, Wallace believed that through debating he learnt to be proud of himself, assertive and accept that he is different from others and should always defend his ground when doing something. Wallace illustrated that when the school held its mini-sports competition students were reluctant to do research on South Africa. He noted:

*But no one was South Africa because of politics. We were not proud to be South Africans and this became a persisting debate. When a black boxer came over here and fought a guy like Harry Kirsty because all the boxers here were white, we would pray that he would beat the white boxer. This actually personified our struggle. No patriotism. No one supported the Springboks.*

Furthermore debates encourage the pedagogy of listening. Freire (1998:11) notes that,

... only the person who listens patiently and critically is able to speak with the other even if at times it should be necessary to speak to him or her. Even when, of necessary, she\he must speak against ideas and convictions of the other person, it is still possible to speak as if other were a subject who is being invited to listen critically and not an object submerged by an avalanche of feeling, abstract words.

Importantly, the school used vigorous debates to encourage the students to think deeply and analytically about the racial classifications, the political atmosphere (what was happening around them), educational and economic challenges and how their decisions and choices would influence the kinds of the future lives that they were to lead. The debates generated certain imagining and desire and hope among the students. Furthermore, the students also engaged in various discussions that raised their consciousness and agency.

## **8.9. CRITICAL ENQUIRY UNLOCKS THE DOORS TO PROGRESS**

Victoria High's teachers used probing questions, discussions and scrutinising of texts as essential methods to promote the students' understanding of the content that they were supposed to learn. More so, the discussions, questioning and analysis of texts developed the students' speaking skills, reasoning, confidence and preparedness. Highlighting how she was urged to be exploratory through discussions and deep questioning, Nadia said:

*My political thinking was developed at school and I learnt to think critically about everything. We did not partake in the 1985 students' boycotts because as a school we examined the strong crippling aftermath of the strikes such*

Nadia elaborated that the discussions nurtured her inquisitiveness to explore and find out facts about things around her and to avoid following the majority without critically weighing the consequences of her actions. The probing questions reminded her of the importance of thinking and reasoning carefully before clearly sharing her views. In this respect Shor (1993:26) avers that "through problem posing, students learn to question answers rather than merely to answer questions. In this learning process, students experience education as something they do, not as something done to them".

Similarly depicting how questions developed his criticality and world views George noted:

*I used to go to church with my mother and siblings. When I joined Victoria high I was exposed to discussions where they questioned the existence of God. I also questioned myself and I began doubting the validity of religion. I stopped going to church. It's only now after I divorced that I feel there is a gap in my life, often I think there is God.*

The analytical questioning and discussions allowed the students to consider new ways of looking at and understanding things. Freire (1973) considers learning based on group dialogues as liberating for everyone involved in the process, while learning that is based on individual monologues promotes silence, apathy, and oppression. As well, Freire (2000) suggests that through group discussions, students are given the opportunity to explore and construct knowledge, enabling them to transform their understanding of themselves, each other, their community and the world around them. Discussions afford students the opportunity to read, write and learn from a position of agency – to engage in a culture of questioning that demands far more than competency in rote learning and the application of acquired skills. In addition, Freire (1978) highlights how discussions transform students' thinking, perceptions and perspectives through their interaction with new knowledge, contexts and people. These engagements provide students with valuable personal experience that enhances their ability to relate their own narratives, social relations and histories, to what they learn. The experience also becomes a resource that helps the students locate

themselves in the concrete conditions of their daily lives, while furthering their understanding of the limits often imposed by different contextual conditions.

In addition to classroom discussion, the students were exposed to practical illustrations in their learning that made them understand the concepts taught better. Describing one of her teachers' pragmatic teaching, Patricia noted how her teacher taught with passion, used real examples to demonstrate her points and states that this made learning very exciting. Highlighting the importance of practical learning and experiments, Bourdieu (1980:52) notes, "one has to situate oneself within 'real activity' as such, that is, in the practical relation to the world ... its things to be done and said, things made to be said. To do this, one has to return to practice, the site of the dialectic of the *opus operatum* [efficacy for an action] and the *modus operandi* [the action]".

Besides practical demonstrations, the students also learnt analytical skills from the close analysis of texts that the school encouraged. Naeema pointed out that *"I have never found a high school teacher who reads to the class. My Grade 8 English teacher would read the introduction of a book in class with great passion and taught us good expression"*. Similarly, Patricia explained how her English teacher developed her interest in reading by reading to the class and analysing the text for the students. More so, Cheryl describes how her biology teacher sharpened her imagination and thinking:

*She did not ask questions in the ordinary manner. She asked the class at one time to write an essay on 'Why do birds fly?' She didn't ask things like name the parts of the bird you know? What is the habitat of the bird? That kind of nonsense, we had to think, we had to assimilate. We had to argue and this now in Biology.*

Such engaging pedagogical practices enabled the students to obtain analytical skills and became reasonable thinkers in their activities in school and future lives. In this regard Freire (1973) suggests that change could come through a process of dialogue and reflection, leading to change through action or intervention and/or political change. Freire (1980:369) asserts that

... the act of knowing involves a dialectical movement that goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action. If learning to read and

write is to constitute an act of knowing, the students must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorising and repeating given syllables, words and phrases, but rather, reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself and on the profound significance of language.

Importantly, discussions, experiments and critical analysis of texts inspired the students' physical, emotional and intellectual engagements with their communities and world at large. They also learnt to share, prepare and develop their communication skills. Besides obtaining life lessons and skills through academic learning, the students also learnt other skills that they took away with them into their lives through sports, field trips and other social welfare clubs.

#### **8.10. LEARNING ON THE MOVE**

Victoria High discourses underscored the significance of learning in all situations. The students were exposed to various social activities within and outside the school that gave them new insights that influenced their thinking, perspectives and identities in key ways. For instance, Cheryl was fortunate to get money from her parents to travel to Germany. This gave her the opportunity to experience the world outside South Africa and gave her a sense of other cultures. The trip moulded her independence and desire to learn about different cultures.

Similarly, Antol learnt a lot of responsibility and discipline through school field trips. His physical education teacher and his wife took students up Table Mountain several times. He enjoyed learning outside the school environment and he adopted this approach when he started working. He took the naughty students from his school up Table Mountain and would spend three days there during the holidays. He would conduct guidance and counselling lessons, which went a long way to reducing indiscipline in the school. According to Bourdieu (1973), educational field trips equip students with cultural capital that positively influences their schooling experiences.

Mikaeel also indicated that his political awareness was enhanced by his trip to Zimbabwe. The trip was not something that was in the curriculum, but was arranged to make the students critically aware of their situations and the role they had to play to change their circumstances. Describing his trip, he said:

*I was fortunate to be part of one of such a group that raised money to go to Zimbabwe post-independence. And what a privilege it was to be in Zimbabwe at that time, to meet political figures at that time – people like Mayor Urimbo, one of the big guys in the central committee of the ZANU-PF. I attended national rallies and we listened to prime minister speaking clearly at that time. What, what an amazing experience to meet, see and hear people that had been part of chimurenga (liberation struggle), to listen first hand and to interact, you know, with South Africans who were taken to Zimbabwe and asked about South Africa.*

Through the field trip, Mikaeel was given a social justice education by accessing the culture of power and politics in Zimbabwe. It opened his critical perspectives and thinking to the racial and social inequalities he was experiencing. He was empowered to share his experiences with others on how Zimbabwe, their neighbouring country, had overcome oppression and injustice.

The educational trips raised the students' political consciousness and connected them to the world. The trips were entertaining and made learning more concrete and easier to understand. The excursions also created 'episodic memories' that enabled the students to retain and apply what they learnt in their lives.

#### **8.11. TRANSFORMATION THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Connecting the students to the world, among other learning practices, encouraged the students to look at issues in broad social contexts, sharpened their capacities for deep and critical inquiry, constructively considering multiple viewpoints and perspectives in dialogue with others, and engaging in socially just actions. Fraser (2007:27), in her theory of social justice, suggests that schools should be sites of possibility and "advocacy" that can transform circumstances of disadvantage and overcome "barriers to learning" by creating "social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life". She suggests that this can be accomplished through the dismantling of institutional obstacles that prevent students from participating on a par with others, as full partners in the education system.

Fraser (2007) outlines how the obstacles that hinder students from participating might be overcome. For example, where disadvantages are thought to be an economic issue,

redistributive measures might be prioritised, i.e. the greater allocation of material or human resources; where they are thought to arise from cultural barriers, recognitive measures might be prioritised, i.e. increased cultural recognition and valuing; and where they are thought of as a political issue, representative measures might be prioritised, i.e. increased avenues to accord equitable representation/political voice.

Demonstrating how the issue of social justice was redistributed at Victoria High, Susan highlighted that social justice was one of the things that she learnt from Victoria High and that it was deeply embedded in her. Exhibiting how she advocated for social justice in her lectures, she observed:

*One thing that Victoria did for me, it allowed me to think beyond the conscription of what the state was putting upon us. As a teacher myself and university lecturer I am often accused of talking politics in my classes. I just laugh and say how can I separate music and politics? They think music can be learnt without a context.*

Susan highlighted that she believed in education for social justice. As a lecturer she encourages her students to participate as equals in all arenas of life. In this regard, Fraser (2008) suggests that overcoming social injustice entails the dismantling of institutionalised obstacles in order that everyone may participate on a par with others.

Antol indicated that he endeavoured to exercise social justice in his life, something he learnt from his schooling at Victoria High. When he became a school principal he actively advocated for social justice and contravened the Western Cape Education Department's enrolment policy. He explained that he

*... opened school gates to allow the refugees to come in. My position was simple, that's the child and this is the school. The child must be educated, the child must come in. We can debate later about the language issue; we can debate later about how the child only speaks French and African dialects in his country. He does not and barely understands English, cannot speak English, cannot speak Afrikaans. How that is going to affect the exams achievement of the school? - we can't discuss that. The first thing is to get the child in. If it means we must change the curriculum, accommodate these children then that must be done.*

Hellene was encouraged to study Law due to her observation of the evictions as a result of the Group Areas Act and the students' boycotts. She felt she could use a Law degree to better represent the marginalised. Today she handles legal cases for minors and women. In the light of this, Burbules and Berk (1999:50) argue that "education must not only enable people to recognise and explain injustice through critical analysis, but also help them develop critical affectivities through which they are moved to change it". Discussing the importance of ensuring that the marginalised are recognised and given a voice, Fraser (2007:25) notes,

all those affected by a given social structure or institution have moral standing as subjects of justice in relation to it ... what turns a collection of people into fellow subjects of justice is not geographical proximity, but their co-imbrication in a common structural or institutional framework, which sets the ground rules that govern their social interaction, thereby shaping their respective life possibilities, in patterns of advantage and disadvantage.

Also highlighting his desire for the implementation of social justice, Denford narrated an incident which occurred during the student boycotts in the 1980s at Victoria High. When they were demonstrating, the police threw teargas and shot at the students. He was marching besides a boy from Langa and felt a strong sense of solidarity which he believed could happen in South Africa if everyone worked together to promote a free and just society. This gave him his first glimpse of an alternative world where people can live together.

Now an artist working with a non-governmental organisation, Denford uses his artwork, with other artists and writers, for the benefit of the community. His organisation's goal is mainly to make people think around their problems.

Victoria High also encouraged social justice through awareness programmes that stressed the value of making informed decisions about the students' particular career pathways. The school invited different professionals to talk about their expertise. Mikaeel noted:

*Whenever there was an awareness programme we had people from different professions who came to give some talks. Some of them would tell us of what was happening outside. There were always surprise happenings in one way or the other.*

*We felt that the curriculum that was there, that instead of schools being sites of subjugation, they actually became sites of education and emancipation.*

The career guidance at the school promoted social justice by preparing the students to change their future predicaments by making the right choices and working hard. This guidance motivated the students to realise that, although they were disadvantaged and marginalised by apartheid education, they still had the potential to perform well and compete on a par with white children.

In addition, some teachers at the school advocated for social justice in their teaching. Miss Daniels mentioned:

*The syllabus pushed on the students gutter education that impeded the students' thinking. Personally as a teacher I always felt it my duty to instil in the children the value of what it means to be equal and to understand themselves and that has always been my message. I built into my classroom learning that catered for the diversity. I had the attitude that every student has the opportunity to share and I ensured that I pushed them beyond the set bar. I told my students to work hard and go to UCT (University of Cape Town) and show them that they know. Though my students had no resources, but I taught them to do their best, to be resilient and to be confident.*

In this vein, Keddie (2012:266) suggests that a “key platform of socially just schooling then must be to prepare students for their future productive participation within this market”. Similarly, Patricia was encouraged to overcome her working-class background by her teachers. She notes that three of her friends worked hard together to overcome their working-class background:

*The three of us are still friends today – Trichardt, Malcolm and I. Malcolm is now an architect, Trichardt is a medical doctor, I a dentist working with postgraduates in public health. We succeeded as well if not better than many of them.*

The students demonstrated that they were empowered to daringly confront inequalities in their various contexts. Notably, fighting injustices promoted the students' agency, sense of responsibility and desire not only to eradicate injustices but to positively precipitate social change. More so, this influenced how they thought about themselves in relation to others.



## 8.12. VIEWING RACE FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Victoria High discourses promoted non-racialism which influenced the learning environment, choice of curriculum, teachers' selection of class discussions and subsequently how the students engaged with their learning, thought about themselves and the opportunities around them. Thus, the school's racialised discourses shaped the students identity in particular ways. Elucidating the fundamental impact of racial discourse, Goldberg (1993:47) argues that racial discourse do not consist simply in descriptive representations of others but include a set of hypothetical premises about human kinds (e.g., the great chain of being, classificatory hierarchies, etc.) and about the differences between them (both mental and physical). It involves a class of ethical choices such as domination and subjugation, entitlement and restriction, disrespect and abuse. It further incorporates a set of institutional regulations, directions, and pedagogic models, for example apartheid, separate development, educational institutions, choice of educational and bureaucratic language, etc. Thus, undoubtedly, the school's racial discourse socialised the students to think about race and school in particular ways culminating in particular construction of their connections, preferences, perspectives and self –concepts.

The students showed that Victoria High provided a rich and unique context that advocated for non-racism and equality. It discouraged negative racial discourses and urged the students to confront the logic and naturalisation of race critically. Elucidating the school's notion of non-racialisation Abigail noted:

*Victoria High was progressive in that they allowed anybody who wanted to come to Victoria to come; whether they were white, brown or black. One year the inspector came to the class and pointed out 'that boy over there why is he in this class? He should be in Langa', 'that girl looks very white, why is she in this school?' And the teacher would say 'she wanted to come, she lives nearby'.*

Despite the inspectors' interrogation, Abigail explained that the school remained resolute on its non-racial policy. This firm standpoint as outlined by Goldberg (1993), assisted Victoria High students to overcome their different racial dispositions, beliefs, hypotheses, and assertions that would have prevented them or excluded them from participating on a par with the more privileged racial groups of students. Importantly, the non-racial enrolment ethos at

the school broke down the racial barriers and stereotypes and motivated the students to accept and respect each other as human beings and not based on racial categorisations. Illustrating how the school promoted this aspect of humanity, Noor explained:

*I can tell you about Mr. Davids, the vice principal when he was interviewed about kids who wanted to come to Victoria High he said, 'I used to be invited by the principal to interview people who made applications to the school. We used to point out to the people that although the school falls under the Department of Coloured Affairs, the school has a set of aims, objectives and directions which were very explicit. We used to point out to them that we don't have coloured children in this school. We don't have African children in this school. We do not have Indian children in this school. We have boys and we have girls'.*

Reiterating the school's non-racial focus Mikaeel outlined:

*Our understanding of sport was that we were not going to buy into the identity that separated South Africa, our teachers were never going to focus on that. Our teachers said, 'We are one race, a human race'. And these are some of the simple things that every student learnt at Victoria High school. It was important to understand that you were being valued on the basis of your humanity.*

Significantly, the focus on humanity and non-racial classification enabled the students to understand as depicted by Buechler (2008) and Loveman (1999) that race categories become real through social definition. Thus, the non-racial position of the school assisted the students to overcome racial stigmas and mental conceptions of inferiority and inadequacy. In this regard, Henry indicated that Victoria High equipped him with the confidence and courage to shift his negative thinking towards the potential of the learning opportunities afforded him by the school. He noted that:

*The teachers told us not to let apartheid keep us behind. They said, 'Don't look at your skin colour, drag that behind. Put it at the back of your mind. Everyone has a chance in life. They can oppress you, but they can't oppress your brain because what you have in your brain no one can take it away from you.' They always said, 'At the end of the day your brain does not work in relation to your skin colour. Your brains work like*

*anyone's brains. It is what you do with your brain. How you want to push yourself forward.'*

This reassurance enhanced, shaped and transformed his thinking, yearning, attitudes, effort and identity in key ways. It developed his agency and assertiveness and helped him to act authoritatively, accountably and diligently to bring positive changes to his future life and that of others. A number of authors (Feldman-Barrett & Swim, 1998; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Pinel, 1999) indicate that negative racial stereotypes define how students perceive the world and how students consequently develop a stigma that can adversely affect their schooling and future lives. Conversely, when students of colour perceive opportunities for the future, and when they feel connected to others at school, their motivation and performance in school improves (Ogbu, 2003; Zirkel, 2002; 2004).

Victoria High also refused to support racial pedagogical practices that promoted racial identity and thinking. Ms Daniels outlined how the school critically engaged with the curriculum that was designed for the students defined as coloured. She noted:

*What was pushed on students was gutter education. I was privileged to be among teachers who always went beyond the curriculum. They never wanted the students to be regarded as second class citizens. They would say show them even if they want to regard you as second class citizens that you can do better than them. So as a teacher I always felt it is my duty to instil in the children the value of what it means to be equal and to understand themselves.*

This critical analysis she explained enabled the students to question inequality and became conscious of the need to compete equally as human kind.

On the other hand, the agency that was developed in the students as a result of it advocating for non-racial discourse, resulted in the students' critically engaging in what they considered inconsistent with the school's policy and operations. Mikaeel directly challenged a teacher for passing a negative racial remark. Similarly, Antol challenged the school for not practicing its dictum for equality when he was punished for supporting The Black Consciousness Movement which was contrary to the school authorities TLISA tendency.

Mikaeel also indicated that he learnt the importance of social justice through the way the school allowed him to interact with students of other races in sports, debates and especially the international trip he undertook. He explained that his trip to Zimbabwe gave him a real example of a country that had overcome racial discrimination and inequality and awakened his desire to fight for social justice. He learnt through the struggles and independence of Zimbabwe that race is a construction that can be struggled over. He remarked:

*When I came back to racial South Africa, I felt quite privileged to have gone to Zimbabwe that time and to see its quality role model and just to see race from just a completely different lens. And to see the apartheid government sink in coming years. Even now I don't see race as others do.*

Highlighting the view that race is a social construction, Omi and Winant (1994) argue that the meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society in both collective action and personal practice. Henry also indicated how the non-racial approach of Victoria High boosted his confidence to work hard, compete with white people and advocate for social justice. He was privileged to have teachers who were white but who stood against racial discrimination. These teachers dedicated the extra salaries they received for working in what the government called 'danger zones', to buy school equipment. In this way Henry learnt that race is not just skin colour, but attitude as white people were actually supporting them.

To a great extent, the students indicated that Victoria High played a prime role in transforming their racial thinking and how they went on to confront race in their lives. Highlighting change in racial attitudes Ortner (2003:274-275), writing about a particular student group in 1958, describes how the students were able to move beyond their familial prejudices and change their racial attitude due to the school strongly advocating an antiracist, antipoverty and pro-civil rights work. In this respect, Bourdieu (1987) highlights how the school has the power to shape students' consciousness. Fraser (1997) argues that students are capable of challenging obstacles socially, economically, politically and racially when given an education that transforms their thinking and future circumstances.

The four teachers interviewed from Victoria High all indicated that the school had a non-racial ethos and enrolment policy. Bigler *et al.* (2003) state that a non-racial school ethos holds the

potential to influence students' economic and advancement opportunities later in life (Ogbu, 2003).

The non-racial discourses as outlined above enhanced the students' optimism, self-esteem, confidence and potential to change their circumstances. They attributed this to the teachers who made them realise their capacities to perform and change.

### **8.13. WHAT IS THE GREATER ASSET FOR LEARNING – THE TEACHER OR PHYSICAL RESOURCES?**

Victoria High regarded the teachers as playing key roles in shaping the thinking and lives of students. The school had a strict recruitment procedure for teachers who were to be part of a community that was dedicated to setting a good example of hard work, innovativeness irrespective of a lack of material resources. Highlighting how the school improvised to overcome the issue of inadequate resources, Cheryl noted:

*The school had two classrooms with a partition that were used as a hall when there were activities for particular groups of students. When the entire school had to meet they assembled at the quad, and when it was raining the students would stand on the stoep under the verandas. The toilets had no toilet pans/toilet seats and never toilet paper. The school grounds were small, without fancy equipment. Irrespective of this they still did sport and excelled in sport and loved sport.*

Likewise, Noor explained that the classrooms were overcrowded, but still the students were willing to come to school. Contrary to Noor and Cheryl's views that they obtained good education irrespective of a lack of learning resources, Bourdieu (1987) regards lack of resources as a source of failure among working-class students. In view of such inadequate resources, Bourdieu's social reproduction theory deems that working-class students will fail as they lack the middle-class economic and cultural capitals that enable them to be competent and efficient. In contrast to Bourdieu's assertion, however, the respondents outlined that, despite their failure to access the middle-class resources that would supposedly enable them to succeed, they still did exceptionally well. Instead of distributing economic resources to the students, as suggested by Fraser (2007), the teachers distributed knowledge and middle-class values that made the students think critically about their education, society

and future lives. They learnt the value of education, aspired to get professional jobs, learnt to critically engage with situations and became self-assertive and proficient citizens. They learnt to be proud of themselves. Elucidating this, Ms Daniels highlighted that one of her classes painted their prefabs in the school colours, as they had pride in their school.

The respondents also highlighted that what made their learning different was not expensive and a large amount of resources, but the teachers who were committed and who worked hard to be creative in order to do their best with the limited resources at the school and make a difference in the learning process of the students. In this regard, Wallace explained:

*Victoria High never had good facilities. We went to Victoria High because it was known and even today is still known for a good standard of education. Parents didn't send their children to get better facilities at the school. They sent them to get good tuition.*

Demonstrating the exceptional dedication and sacrifices the teachers made to develop the students into critical and responsible citizens, Noor remarked:

*The teachers never complained that we do not have facilities, they realised that it is the effort, the work that matters more than the facilities. That's why you look at Victoria High today it is a school to be proud of. Not just mourn over resources like most schools do today. The teachers and the parents were committed to keep the flag of the school flying high.*

Equally, Mikaeel noted that, as a school, there was more to learning than resources. He explained that:

*We didn't have a hall or sporting fields. We were a disadvantaged school but now some of the disadvantaged schools are exposed to vandalism and stealing, lack of safety – areas like Manenberg. To me, resources alone won't change the scenarios in the current schools. It was teachers who have a calling for the job and not those who want money.*

Elucidating the teachers' enthusiasm towards their work, Henry explained that Mr Williams, a white teacher, ferried the boys to sport events with his own car. He never complained about doing this, nor was he remunerated for the extra time he gave up or for his petrol costs. He

sacrificed his time because he loved teaching and was committed to giving the students the best.

Denford also explained that his woodwork teacher would supplement the few materials allocated to his class by the education department, so that the class would make bigger tables. This extraordinary commitment made the students think and perform at their best as their teacher had made sacrifices to support their learning opportunities.

The students attested that they received the best education at Victoria High, even surpassing that at some white schools that were well resourced. Naeema explained:

*I feel I received the best education at Victoria High that I could have received under the circumstances. The education that I received at the school at that time was not offered in other South African coloured schools. I say the best education under the circumstances, because I am aware that I received a disadvantaged education, but at the same time I received the best because we followed the curriculum which was designed by the apartheid government, which didn't believe that coloured, black or Indian children deserved the same education with the white children. At the school we did not have adequate books, etc. In my own opinion the idea of education is not what happens in the classroom – finishing the entire syllabus; but I feel it is much about the development of a child as a whole, and this is what Victoria High did.*

In this respect Fraser (1998) believes that social justice can be accomplished when the teaching and learning take on a systemic, multi-faceted approach that takes into account all aspects of a student's being and becoming, and which requires all role players to play a part. The dialogues and the willingness of the teachers to imaginatively and critically engage with the life and learning experiences of the students went a long way to instil in the students acceptance of self and critical thinking. The school challenged the racial stereotypes of colouredness and working-class status, in order that the students could compete on a par with white people. The knowledge distributed to them also made them look at the political circumstances and their future prospects differently.

In addition, Mr Walters highlighted that the school focused on the teachers as learning assets and not the inadequacy of the resources at the school. He explained his experience working

for the National Department of Education and Implementation where he visited a number of schools in different provinces:

*There was excellent teaching and learning in some mud schools in the Eastern Cape. The schools had barely the basics; even in the mud schools of the Eastern Cape you can get excellence. So what is it that makes a teacher in a mud school in the Eastern Cape get children to read better than urban children? No resources, no wi-fi phones, no electronic tablets and what not. I believe that if you have a dedicated, competent teacher, it's your greatest asset. You can have your white board and I have seen it, white boards and all that, those things only work well with good teachers. In the hands of poor teachers they are useless. Teachers are the tremendous source for children, not only in terms of knowledge, but motivation as well. I believe that resources are important, make no mistake, they are important, but they are only beneficial in the hands of a good teacher. In the hands of a poor teacher they are useless, because there is no resource that can take over the role of a teacher.*

Mr Walters further outlined that Victoria High School never complained about the lack of resources, because the teachers were encouraged to be widely read and knowledgeable. Most of the teachers were studying through University of South Africa (UNISA), a correspondence institution. He notes:

*I started with the Basic Teacher's Certificate, but I had to study in order to perform better. That was the kind of resource. You can't be a source of motivation if you have nothing within you. You have to develop yourself, in order to be that resource, and those teachers were studying; some through formal studies and others through mere discussion groups among the teachers, with other schools, among ourselves, we had discussion groups. This was the message that was then disseminated to the students and it motivated them to work hard.*

Romeo (2003), in his book *Technology Matters But Good Teachers Matter More*, shares the sentiments of Mr Walters, stating that technology cannot replace the important role that teachers play in the learning process. Romeo (2003) outlines that teaching resources are not the panacea to making learning meaningful and worthwhile and cannot replace the role of the teacher. Teachers should not rely on resources, but be leaders, guides, facilitators and



mentors in the learning process. They should encourage students when they struggle and inspire them to set and reach their goals. They have to be role models, leading by example and giving direction when necessary.

The participants illustrated how the teachers, irrespective of a lack of resources, managed to create learning environments that motivated the students to work hard, think critically and produce good work.

#### **8.14. CONCLUSION**

This chapter highlighted that the school's teachers were instrumental in developing the students' transposable capital. It demonstrated that students were in a better position to connect to their contexts and world at large when they were exposed to pedagogical practices that promote their reflexivity, engagement and deliberations. It illustrated how the students' identities were shaped by what and how teachers choose to teach or not. It exemplified how the teachers' outstanding dedication and diligent practices at Victoria High enabled the students to overlook the acute shortage of resources at the school. The teachers employed learning techniques that actively engaged the students and developed their agency, critical thinking, imagination and creativity. These skills helped the students in their transition to adulthood and life. Consequently the learning the students took away from their schooling experiences at Victoria High, greatly framed who they became, as demonstrated in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 9: THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN PRODING STUDENTS ‘TRANSPOSABLE CAPITAL’**

### **9.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is an analysis of the impact of the Victoria High school’s philosophy, educational disposition, and pedagogical approaches. As explained in chapter 3, cultural capital refers to the skills, knowledge, understanding, doing and thinking that a person possesses, that empowers him or her to perform social functions and adapt to changing circumstances. Cultural capital is developed and redeveloped and is essential for enabling persons to navigate different spaces.

Transposable capital refers to the ability to acquire and build cultural capital in one space, in this case, the space of the students’ high school, and transfer and use these capitals in their later lives in different social spaces such as university, profession, political activity and civic work in the community. Importantly, the shifting or movement from one space or life activity to another depends on the mobilising of such capitals to successfully adapt to the demands of the new space. In the case of these students their transposable capital enabled them to take a critical set of dispositions and skills acquired during their schooling into their new life arenas, marked by a critical commitment to progressive values and social change. The word ‘transposable’ thus refers to more than simply the transference of a set of skills and critical capacity from one space to another. Unlike the word transposition, transference denotes aspects of detachment. For example, a person can transfer money into a friend’s account. The person simply moves the money, but he or she remains in the original form or position, whereas transposing something entails an entire movement or shifting of the person, informed by his acquired skills and capital, from one field to another. In this way transposable capital involves the entirety of a person’s self, their thinking, perspectives and decisions.

Transposable capital can therefore be described as the complete embodiment and shifting of the person with all their knowledge, skills, thinking and doing (their capitals) from one environment to another. Transposable capital refers to the skills and knowledge that are owned by a person and which they are able to use or move with all the time. The capitals therefore become in-built or deep-seated. The capitals influence the being, who the person is - his or her identity. Importantly, the person engages with the capitals acquired, gets

involved, or does the activity. By participating or doing the person gets hands-on experience that gets entrenched in him or her. Participation deepens the understanding of knowledge and enables the person to act or to perform.

Transposable capital comprise of three elements: reflexivity, engagement and deliberation. In this regard reflexivity refers to a person's thinking, adapting and changing. Thinking through something deepens the understanding and use of the capital obtained. Reflexivity also entails constantly referring to what has been taught. Furthermore, reflexivity (Hooley, 2015) enables the habitus to adapt and adopt new ideas without necessarily being dominated by them. On this basis, a person with a particular cultural and economic experience can maintain a view as well as incorporate contrary views.

I consider engagement as involvement in doing something. It means actively participating in doing something. Engagement shows a close connection between the person and what he or she does. This close connection involves the person's psyche, mind and body. Such absolute connection frames the individual's thinking, imagination and doing.

I regard deliberation as a human act. It entails giving a voice towards something normally accompanied by an action. In giving a voice, I consider the act of deliberation as being able to promote reasoning and better judgement. In this manner deliberation liberates and empowers a person's agency and autonomy.

I use the theories of Bourdieu, Freire and Fraser to explain how the school developed the students' three elements of their transposable capital: reflexivity, engagement and deliberation. In the next section I start off by explaining how the school developed the element of reflexivity among the students which influenced their doing, thinking and lives.

## **9.2. DEVELOPING THE STUDENTS' CAPACITY OF REFLEXIVITY AS AN ELEMENT OF TRANSPOSABLE CAPITAL**

This section uses Bourdieu's theory to explain how the culture and climate of Victoria High shaped the students' development of reflexivity as an element of transposable capital that influenced their personal learning, kinds of thinking, doing, careers and lives. Bourdieu sees schools as playing key roles in developing the students' reflexivity as an element of transposable capital. Bourdieu (1971:192) notes how "it may be assumed that every

individual owes to the type of schooling he has received a set of basic, deeply interiorised master patterns". Bourdieu considers each school as unique and variously nurturing the development of reflexivity as an element of transposable capital. Bourdieu's field theory conceives schools as fields that have historically, politically, and socially defined contexts in which students, their friends, their families and communities are positioned to behave in different ways that respond to the logics of power that maintain the worlds that they inhabit (Thomson, 2008:70). More so, Bourdieu outlines that there are positions in the field that command the whole structure – those who dominate in a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage. Also, Bourdieu (1984) highlights that the positions in the field are determined by the amount of capitals the different players have. The students in the study outlined that similar to a field with its own logic, Victoria High had a political culture that raised the students' political consciousness and the need to exercise social justice. The school's discourses of non-racism, academic excellence and secularisation gave the students different perspectives about their schooling and what they wanted to become.

Bourdieu observes that "positions in fields can to some extent be shaped by the habitus that actors bring with them" (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1975, cited in Swartz, 1997:123). At Victoria High some students like Mikael and Roland refused the subjects that they were assigned at the school because their parents had the intellectual capital to know what subjects their children should be studying to enable them to pursue careers of their choice.

Bourdieu also uses the analogy of the 'game' to illustrate how there are always those who do not agree with the rules of the game, meaning that the field is also "simultaneously a space of conflict and competition in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of effective capital in it" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:7). Bourdieu indicates that some students resist "the forces of the field with their specific inertia; that is their propensities which exist in embodied form as dispositions or in objectified form in goods and qualifications" (Bourdieu, 1984:110). In this regard, there are some students like Antol who openly challenged the school for failing to accommodate him because he had embraced the Black Consciousness Movement ideology that contradicted the TLSA tendencies. Antol confronted these issues through the opinion pieces that he published in the school magazine that directly challenged the school's discourses of race and secularism.

Bourdieu (1987) also sees schools as promoting the development of the reflexivity element of transposable capital by equipping students with the “ways of thinking and dispositions to life” that provide them with the “expected behaviours, expected language competencies, the explicit and implicit values, knowledge, attitudes to and relationship with academic culture required for success in school” (Henry *et al.*, 1988:233). Bourdieu suggests that teachers play a crucial role in delivering to the students these powerful epistemic tools that not only help the students to understand the production of their own histories, but enable them to conceive of new and different ways of doing things (Lakomski, 1984:161). Thus, developing new ways of thinking and encouraging the students to adapt new behaviours by changing accordingly, enhancing their acquisition of transposable capital that enable them to relate with the world well. Bourdieu further outlines how the habitus is firmly embodied and grounded in the person, meaning that it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions (dispositions), but is expressed in durable ways “of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking” (Bourdieu, 1990a:7). Patricia exemplified how she embedded the reflexivity element of transposable capitals by explaining that:

*People in this institution, even today say, ‘You write beautiful reports. You write beautifully.’ And I think to myself, some of those people have gone to privileged schools - they have been to schools where they had the best education and yet my education from Victoria seems to be much more superior to what they were taught at school.*

Similarly, Susan explained that she learnt the value of politics such that she cannot divorce politics from her music lessons (as detailed in section 8.11.).

Bourdieu (1988) views social and cultural capitals (objectified, institutionalised and embodied) as broadening the students’ thinking and perspectives of world. The field trips, network of friends, sharing of information and quality of readings influenced the students’ identities, thinking, perspectives and lives. The students confirmed that the school invited professional experts to address them about career choices and opportunities.

The section has illustrated how the school endowed the students with the reflexivity to enable them to think critically about themselves and their future as well as adapt to new situations

once they left school. The next section discusses the way in which the school developed the students' engagement capacity as a second element of transposable capital.

### **9.3. DEVELOPING THE STUDENTS' CAPACITY OF ENGAGEMENT AS AN ELEMENT OF TRANSPOSABLE CAPITAL**

This section uses Freire's theory to explain how Victoria High developed the element of engagement by exposing the students to learning practices that framed their thinking, perspectives and who they became. Freire's theory of critical pedagogy underscores how pedagogical practices influence learning in ways that can either raise consciousness by giving people voice, or damage their creativity by treating them as objects of the world to be fed with knowledge (Freire, 1970:76-90). Highlighting the importance of engagement as an element of transposable capital, Freire (1970) notes that genuine learning can be achieved through the active engagement with the students' lived experience, through critical reflection and praxis (Aronowitz, 2003), where teachers and students become equal co-investigators and co-creators of knowledge and the world, and where education is a collective activity. Thus, to develop the students' engagement capacity, Freire (1970) suggests that teachers should create forms of dialogue in the classroom that promote the students critical thinking, connection and engagement with life. Freire (1978) considers engaging and involving students in discussions as fundamental to developing and inspiring critical thinking among students not just about how the past is reproduced and the present can be understood, but about how to think beyond the present. Kress and Luke explain that critical thinking should inspire the students to engage with issues in the world in order to soar "beyond the immediate confines of everyday experiences and entering into a critical dialogue with history in ways that imagine a future that does not merely reproduce the present" (2013:xii).

Freire (1970; 1978) outlines that to embed the engagement element of transposable capital, teachers have to employ critical pedagogical practices such as debates and discussions which open up spaces for students to come to terms with their own power as critically engaged citizens, where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is inserted as part of the purpose of education, if not democracy itself (Said, 2001:141).

The students attested that Victoria High promoted their engagement element of transposable capital through actively encouraging them to participate in debates, discussions and deep

analysis of texts, which broadened their perspectives of the world. The students confirmed that the engagement element of transposable capital framed their imagination, criticality, assertiveness and self-worth. Cheryl outlined that she is a critical thinker and does not accept things on face value. She is open-minded and makes effort to seek convincing and relevant information (as detailed in 7.5.). Furthermore she is not intimidated by anyone and is prudent in making judgment about her students, colleagues and friends.

Similarly Wallace attested that critical thinking is not something foreign to him but something he imbibed. He does not make quick and ignorant decisions. He always put things in perspective is open to criticisms. When his children question him he does not brush them aside or consider them insolent. He explains to them and teaches them to reason, evaluate things or situations before making a decision or passing a comment (as detailed in section 5.9.).

Freire (1970) considers it necessary to connect students to their social worlds by empowering them to critically engage with how they exist in the world, enabling them to realise that the world is not a static reality but ‘a reality in process’ and in ‘transformation’.

Furthermore, Freire perceives engagement as an element of transposable capital as holding the potential to promote the students’ sense of self-consciousness as they learn to think critically and "recognize connections between their individual problems, experiences and social contexts in which they are embedded" (Purmensky, 2009:108). In this way, the personal experiences of students become an invaluable resource – something that empowers the students to transform their circumstances. Mikaeel outlined that he uses the drama skills embedded in him from the school to teach the students at his correction centre where he currently works, to act in public in order to earn money to assist the school to pay some of the bills. Similarly, Antol demonstrated that the engagement element of transposable capital developed his consciousness and agency to transform the conditions of his society. Antol’s active participation in drama at school influenced his thinking and life. He used drama to make people aware of the injustices of apartheid and encouraged people to debate about the possibilities of bringing about changes in their lives (as detailed in section 7.3.). In light of this, Freire considers the engagement element of transposable capital fundamental in enabling

the students to perceive the “reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform” (Freire, 1993:31).

#### **9.4. DEVELOPING THE STUDENTS’ CAPACITY FOR DELIBERATION AS AN ELEMENT OF TRANSPOSABLE CAPITAL**

This section employs aspects of Nancy Fraser’s theory to explain the connections between the students’ schooling experiences, life contexts and backgrounds, as well as the learning practices that the students identified as having the most telling influence on how they understood their lives during their schooling, and which helped their subsequent thinking and decision making.

To develop deliberation as an element of transposable capital, Fraser’s concept of social justice shows how a school can be a ‘space of new possibility’ where the circumstances and plight of disadvantaged students are transformed. To overcome the plight of the disadvantaged and dismantle institutionalised obstacles, Fraser’s social justice theory shows how schools can encourage students to participate “on par with others as full partners in social interaction” (Keddie, 2012). To promote equal participation and attain the deliberation aspect of transposable capital schools have to promote three distinct facets of social justice: redistribution in the economic sphere, recognition in the socio-cultural sphere and representation in the political sphere (Fraser, 2008). These three features of social justice propel the development of deliberation as an element of transposable capital in different ways. Exemplifying the detriments of failing to recognise students in their learning Fraser (1995:71 quoting Taylor, 1995) notes that:

Non-recognition or misrecognition ... can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need.

Furthermore, Fraser discourages schools from performing acts of misrecognition by regarding students in relation to their social markers or distinctive attributes that are ascribed to them such as race, gender, social class and nationality. These markers, she argues, impacts on the students’ self-esteem, self-worth, respect, dignity and agency. Thus to break down all barriers



created by social markers the school has to promote discourses that discourage group differences, status, stereotypes that deny individuals or groups the same or equal experiences and opportunities. In this respect Fraser (2007) suggests that participatory parity would be prevented through a hierarchical status order when institutionalised patterns of cultural value depreciate certain attributes associated with people or the activities in which they are engaged. Thus to overcome discrimination, Fraser encourages schools to create spaces for inclusion of students irrespective of class, race, gender or geographical location.

Henry, one of the student interviewees, outlined that his capacity to deliberate was cultivated at Victoria High and he now works as a key member of the workers union. He believes in equality and advocates for promotion that is not based on racial grounds. Similarly, Antol highlighted how as a school principal, he promotes social justice by accepting refugees into his school even though it has impacted negatively on the school's results as the refugees have struggled to understand the language of instruction (as detailed in section 8.11.). Mikaeel also challenged the education department not to close the correctional school where he currently works as he feels that the school is offering rehabilitation to the students.

Fraser (2007) asserts that when a school consciously create spaces for 'equitable relationships' it fosters the students' understanding of the world, leading to productive social interactions, mutual respect, development of their own language and imagination of a different world from that of oppression.

According to Fraser (2008), schools also develop the students' deliberation element of transposable capital when they redistribute materials to the disadvantaged students to enable them to compete on par with the privileged students. The interviewed students attested to the fact that Victoria High redistributed to them the knowledge that made them competitive. Henry and Denford described that their readiness to assist poor people in need was nurtured by their teachers who used their personal money to pay for the fuel to transport students for sports and to purchase extra wood to make bigger tables for their projects. The students further attested to the fact that although Victoria High had limited physical resources, and could not redistribute material resources to them, the teachers redistributed knowledge to them that developed their critical thinking, assertiveness, agency and sense of self-worth. Importantly, by emphasising the redistribution aspect of social justice, the school

encouraged not only the redistribution of materials but also the intellectual capital that delivered levels of critical thinking that allowed the students to operate in the world in a more equitable way.

Fraser (1997) regards giving students representation in their learning as an important part of promoting the deliberation element of transposable capital. Fraser (1997) outlines that representation is concerned about social belonging – who is regarded as a member of the community and who has the right to make decisions and make claims for social justice. She argues that representation is necessary in schools to develop the students' agency and capability to make independent decisions.

The students confirmed that Victoria High created spaces for them to actively engage in several schooling activities, and to take responsibility and leadership roles in various capacities such as prefects, group leaders, magazine editors, student representatives, sports or club leaders and organisers. Illustrating how her deliberative capacity was nurtured at school Nadia noted:

*I used to be a student representative of our class. I learnt the value of making a difference; making a difference to yourself and others. Now I work to give women and girls State protection against violence, sexual harassment and sexual violence. I also take up cases defending women's property rights such as the right to housing, preventing the loss of tenure after dissolution of partnerships and inheriting property.*

Also explaining how his deliberative capacity was nurtured at school, Noor observed that:

*The issue of Victoria high was all about fighting struggle but from an intellectual point of view. I stand up and I fight for justice. That's what I do. I don't step backwards, Nulla vestigia retrorsum. I don't step back when I see there is a problem. I confront problems and I think that is important. And my policy is to fight racism and oppression each minute I sense this in any place, nothing less as I fight for social justice. That's why I got in trouble already here (work place) sometime. They tried to get rid of me immediately, but at the end of the day its God's will that I 'm here. And I will never take a foot back. Today there are quite*

*a number of Victorian's at places like this institution. Each minute someone says he or she is from Victoria high then you must know that this person is a political person, and will fight injustice.*

Likewise, outlining how the deliberation element of transposable capital was embedded in his life Denford explained:

*A number of other writers, artists and designers including myself have a number of projects. One is a sticker where we go around the located places, like the city is evicting people, and we protest against their action. The most recent one, like in Cape Town close to Green Point, there is an unfinished bridge. Poor people used to sleep under the bridge. What the city did is they cemented thirty centimetres of high rocks under the ground. It's huge and is longer than my house area. Now the homeless people cannot sleep there any longer. We did put stickers, we did this for the public and there is no money you know. We don't sell these stickers, it's just for the public gain.*

Here Denford indicates that he believes that social justice can only be attained when people make effort not only to talk about social justice, but to practically unite and dismantle the barriers for equity. In this respect, Fraser (2008) shows how the deliberation element of transposable capital can be attained when schools dismantle institutionalised obstacles that prevent students from participation on par with others.

This section has shown that creating spaces that develop the students' capacity for deliberation as an element of transposable capitals promotes their assertiveness to voice their concerns. Deliberation nurtures students' forms of responsibility, leadership skills, independent thinking, agency and self-worth.

## **9.5. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have demonstrated how the three elements of transposable capital (reflexivity, engagement and deliberation) influenced the learning, thinking, decision making and lives of students. I used Bourdieu's theory of practice (field, habitus and capital) to show how the school's culture, climate and general discourses of learning prompted the reflexivity

element of transposable capital. I employed Freire critical pedagogy to illustrate how the school's teaching and learning practices facilitated the students' development of engagement as an element of transposable capital. The school encouraged the students to actively participate in drama, discussions and critical analysis of texts which developed the students' critical thinking, sense of self, agency, autonomy and self-esteem. I also used Fraser's theory of social justice to show how Victoria High gave the students forms of representation that enabled their development of deliberation as an element of transposable capital that influenced their identity, decisions, social justice and associations.

## CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

The dissertation explored fourteen students' schooling and learning experiences at Victoria High, a school with limited resources under apartheid (between 1968 and 1990) and discussed how the school practices influenced the students' thinking, doing and subsequent lives. The aim of this research was to find out what alternative teaching and learning practices schools can employ to develop students who can assertively face challenges in their lives. The research focus was inspired by the policymakers and educational discourses that frequently 'blame' schools for student underperformance and for inadequately preparing students for future employment. The research thus, inquired into what kinds of teaching and learning practices are necessary to develop student agency and enable students to effectively bridge the gap between school and their future work opportunities and successful lifestyles.

This dissertation research process is a continuation of my Masters research at Victoria High in 2010, which was based on interviews with students about their goals, aspirations and notions of achievement. During this research I became aware of the school's learning culture that promoted critical thinkers and was curious to find out how the school promoted the students' agency. I thus decided to interview past students who were at the school during the period 1968 to 1990 and explore the culture of teaching and learning at the school. My aim was to understand how the pedagogical practices at Victoria High shaped the students' learning, perspectives, identities and lives.

To address this dissertation's research questions regarding what the fourteen participants learnt at Victoria High during the South African apartheid era, and how the teaching and learning at the school firmly shaped how they came to understand their world in order to locate themselves in it, in chapter two I drew on extensive literature that offered me insights into how student identities are framed by their learning. The literature included the kinds of agencies that students develop in the process, the social factors involved in the process, how school cultures and pedagogical practices influence the students' perspectives and the nature of transition from school to adult life. As the research was situated in the period from 1968 and 1990, a period in which South African was governed by the apartheid regime, I also looked at literature that discusses changing forms of race, social class, religion, gender and geography in the contemporary world, as well as how these elements intersect in social settings. I further

explored international and local studies that focused on students transitioning from school to adult life. This literature assisted me to develop key definitions and concepts about social class, race, and other contextual factors that intersect with student identity-making. This chapter includes a brief history of Cape Town and the historical trajectory of teaching and learning at Victoria High during the period 1968-1990 in order to consider how it shaped the students' aspirations, thinking, identity and future prospects.

In chapter three I discuss the theories of Bourdieu, Freire and Fraser, in order to highlight how the school created learning spaces that framed the students' learning, thinking, doing and lives. The three theorists' works were significant in helping me understand and explain how the home backgrounds of the students, the historical moments in their schooling experiences, the kinds of learning they were exposed to, the kinds of people they interacted with, and how their thinking, decision making, transition from school into their future lives were shaped.

Bourdieu's field theory was useful in understanding the impact of schools' specific logics and rules in influencing the culture of learning at the school. His theory of 'field' was also important to show how the school is "simultaneously a space of conflict and competition in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of effective capital in it" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:7). Bourdieu's (1987) concept of habitus was relevant in showing how the school generated the students' "ways of thinking and dispositions to life" that provided them with the "expected behaviours, expected language competencies, the explicit and implicit values, knowledge, attitudes to and relationship with academic culture required for success in school" (Henry *et al.*, 1988:233). Bourdieu (1988) notion of cultural capital (objectified, institutionalised and embodied) was useful to understand how the different resources the students accessed influenced their attitudes, preferences, perceptions and values that they attached to their learning, thinking and lives.

Freire's theory of critical pedagogy was fundamental in underlining the importance of pedagogical practices in raising the students' consciousness and engagement with critical thinking via their schooling. Freire's work shows how engaging students in learning, for example, through drama, dialogue, discussion and probing questions, develops the students' critical thinking, imagination, perspective of the world and hands-on experience. On the other

hand, according to Freire, the banking method stifles the students' creativity and independent thinking.

I used Fraser's theory of social justice and its three elements of redistribution, recognition and representation. Fraser's (2007) conceptualisation of social justice was useful to explore how schools redistribute materials, knowledge and skills to expand student thinking, imagination, and connection with the world. Fraser's theory further underscores the significant role a school can play in creating spaces where students are given various forms of representation to develop their agency, citizenry, independency and accountability. Furthermore, Fraser highlights how students are promoted to learn when schools break down barriers of discrimination based on race, gender, class, religion and geographical location.

In chapter four I describe the methodology used. The qualitative methodology enabled me to explore the students' understanding of how their learning experiences impacted on their thinking and lives. The emic perspective of the qualitative paradigm was useful as it enabled me to obtain first-hand information from the participants on how their school learning experiences influenced their thinking, decision-making, opportunities and lives. Within the qualitative paradigm, I chose to use the life history and life course techniques to enable me to locate the participant's narratives in their contexts, time and space. I selected the life history and life course techniques as there is always a critical interactive relationship between the students' lives, their perceptions, experiences, historical and social contexts and events (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:2). More so, the life history and life course techniques enhanced my interpretation of the students' memories and perceptions in ways that brought fresh perspectives to how they internalised learning over their lifetimes. In this respect, understanding the students' political, economic and social contexts are crucial to understand how Victoria High framed their learning experiences, thinking, identities and lives.

I used semi-structured interviews to generate deep conversations with the participants which allowed them to share their ideas, feelings, insights, and attitudes about how Victoria High impacted their thinking and lives. In addition to my fourteen student participants, I also interviewed four teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of the teaching and learning culture of the school that had lasting imprints on the lives of the students. The information I

received from the teachers helped me to triangulate and validate the information I received from the students.

The teachers at Victoria High played a fundamental role in developing the thinking of the students and preparing them for their future lives, as elaborated in chapter five. The school set up rigorous recruitment criteria for teachers and they were expected to display a passion, commitment, dedication and expertise in their teaching. The teachers were also given clear guidelines on how they were expected to teach and conduct themselves within the school as they were required to be good role models that promoted a culture of critical thinking and learning in order that the students at Victoria High could become responsible citizens. The student and teacher interviews further highlighted how the teachers at Victoria High worked beyond the prescribed hours: before school started, after school, over weekends and during school holidays in order to provide the students with an education that could change their future life circumstances. The teachers were also urged to further their own studies, to be creative and never to regard the school's lack of adequate resources as a hindrance in developing the students thinking and future prospects.

The school promoted a non-racial discourse, secularisation and equality. The teachers emphasised that the students' thinking should not be limited by their racial markers, social class or geographical location. This approach developed the students' self-worth, self-esteem and respect, as well as motivating them to work hard and aspire to a better future.

Victoria High also promoted critical learning and pedagogical practices that motivated and engaged the students as detailed in chapter six and seven. The teachers connected the students learning to their political, social and economic contexts and this made what the students learning familiar and meaningful. The teachers used various participatory activities such as drama, discussions, probing questions, critical analysis of texts, films and field trips to connect the students learning to their daily lives. These activities inspired the students to learn and developed their critical thinking, ingenuity, perspectives on life, assertiveness and agency.

Furthermore, the students actively participated in the school as prefects, student representative council (SRC) members, and members of various sports codes and clubs. The



students learnt responsibility, autonomy, decision making, critical thinking, organisation skills, leadership skills, citizenry and equality through these activities.

In chapter eight I used the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire and Nancy Fraser to analyse how the pedagogical practices influenced the students' learning experiences at Victoria High. The students attested that the pedagogical practices developed their assertiveness, self-worth, agency, critical thinking, autonomy and social justice. Notably, as explained in chapter nine, the students attested that the knowledge and skills they obtained at Victoria High became embedded in their lives. What they learnt became a type of transposable capital that influenced their thinking, doing and lives. In chapter nine I demonstrated that the transposable capital that Victoria High developed in the students had three important elements: reflexivity, engagement and deliberation. The reflexivity element promoted their reflections on what they learnt, enabling them to adapt to new environments and demands of the school as well as changing their habitus to meet the expectations of the school. The engagement element promoted the students' practical involvement in their learning as well as providing them with a theoretical understanding of what they learnt. The students were constantly critically questioned during their learning process by their teachers and this enhanced their understanding. The students' deliberation capacity was developed through the school giving the students forms of representation in sports and clubs. The school also gave the students a voice and encouraged them to act decisively in different working environments and circumstances.

### **10.1. THE DISSERTATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

In the dissertation I demonstrated that for learning to influence the thinking and lives of students it needs to promote a form of transposable capital in the students' lives. Transposable capital has three elements namely; reflexivity, engagement and deliberation. These elements influence the students' psyche, thinking and doing, enabling them to embody, own or be in control of what they learn. When students imbibe the transposable capital, learning becomes meaningful, relevant, useful, applicable and liberating. The reflexivity element of the transposable capital enables the students to constantly think through what they learn in order to refine their thinking about what they learn which will consequently enable a deeper understanding. Secondly, reflexivity enables the students' habitus to adapt

and adopt new ideas without necessarily being dominated by them, thus promoting their autonomy and agency. Thirdly, reflexivity allows them to make necessary changes that increase their thinking and actions.

The engagement element of transposable capital promotes the students to learn to think critically by physically, emotionally and psychologically participating in an activity. This total involvement of the student enables what the student learns to be entrenched in his or her thinking.

Deliberation encourages the students to act. Importantly the students' learn to voice their concerns and act based on well-thought out reasoning and careful weighing up of each circumstance. In this process the students' agencies is developed and are empowered to think critically and take independent decisions.

Importantly, reflexivity, engagement and deliberation develop the students' power of mind, power of action and power of voice in their society. Furthermore, by imbibing these elements the students are promoted into a deeper understanding and authority over their learning and life's challenges.

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## ADDENDUM A: SCHOOL LETTER OF CONSENT

Mrs J. Matope  
49 Welgevoden  
Stellenbosch  
7600

Dear Mrs J. Matope

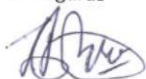
RESEARCH PROPOSAL: DISCOURSES OF LEARNING IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS THAT ATTENDED A SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN BETWEEN 1975 AND 1990

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research at Livingstone High School in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions.

1. The principal, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. The principal, educators, learners and school should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from June 2013 – March 2014.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term.

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards



Mr T. Bruinders  
Principal

## ADDENDUM B: WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT LETTER OF CONSENT



Directorate: Research

[Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za)

Tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

[wced.wcape.gov.za](http://wced.wcape.gov.za)

**REFERENCE:** 20130605-12254

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Jasmine Matope  
49 February Street  
Green Oaks  
Welgevonden  
7600

**Dear Mrs Jasmine Matope**

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES AND THE LIVES AND LEARNING OF 15 STUDENTS THAT ATTENDED A SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN BETWEEN 1968 AND 1990**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and students are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, students and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.

3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 July 2013 till 17 June 2014**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T. Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services**  
**Western Cape Education Department**  
**Private Bag X9114**  
**CAPE TOWN**  
**8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

**Directorate: Research**

**DATE: 05 June 2013**

## **ADDENDUM D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **A. Interview instruments with students**

I provide the questions below to give a sense of what I am trying to achieve in the interviews and to show the logical sequence of the questions. Many participants may probably answer 2 or 3 of the questions in a single response. In such a case, the follow up question would not be needed.

In-depth interviews normally include only a few questions. However, I have provided a large number of questions here to assist me when interviewees are unresponsive, need further prodding, or simply to interview schedule to guide me to hold onto some structure and flow in the interview.

### **Background INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

What is your first name and surname?

-When/where were you born?

-Are you/have you been married?

- Do you have any children?

- What are their names (girl/boy)?

-When/where were they born?

-Where do your children go to school/ college/ university/work?

What are your children studying?

Why are they studying different subject/ profession?

-Tell me some things about your life that you feel define who you are (sport, artist, social experiences, etc.)?

-Where do you stay?

-Where do you work?



-How long have you been working in this job?

Under apartheid in the 1970s, how were you classified – white, Indian or Malay, coloured or African/black?

**This group of questions is aimed at getting the participants' views on how the school influenced their learning and lives**

-When did you start school?

-Which primary school did you attend?

-How did you come to decide which high school to attend?

-When did you enrol at Victoria High School?

-Was it a feeder school or needed certain results to get into the school?

-Would you say Livingstone High School was a middle class school, if you say so why?

-Did it matter whether it was a middle class or not?

- How did you get to school?

- How many classes were there?

- How many children were in each class?

- Can you tell me about your teachers?

- Did they emphasize certain things as important in life?

- Did they encourage discussion?

- Did they treat children from different social backgrounds or races differently?

-Did you recognise any sort of class differentiation at all or social divisions at Livingstone High School?

How did you see it or understand it?

Was any teacher an important influence on you?

What subjects were you taught at school?

Did you have a choice over the subjects you learnt?

Tell me about the subjects you did?

Describe the games you played at school

Did the school directly/indirectly exercise its influence on your learning?

What did you most enjoy studying (other kinds of things that interested you)?

- What are your views about VHS?

Was the school competitive?

What in your opinion made the school create a sustainable and competitive environment?

Did the school encourage and empower you to make significant decisions?

Are there any skills you think you learnt from the school?

What do you think you learnt from VHS?

Do you think if you had gone to another school you could have got the same thing?

Can you tell me a particular occasion while at school that you remember? What happened?

How did the situation develop? How did it come about? How did you feel about it?

-What were your important moments at Livingstone High School?

What challenges did you face in school?

What do you think you learnt from Livingstone High School?

When you were at Livingstone High School what did you think you will become?

-What made you want to become this? Did the school influence your aspirations?

Who were your role models?

**These next questions may seem silly but I want to build individual pictures:**

-What do you do in your spare time? (Clubs/organisations/sports/games/dances/hobbies/cinema/theatre/pub?)

-Could you tell me how you spent your Saturdays or Sundays?

Do you hold any position in the church/organisation you belong? (what is your role?)

- What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations?

- What would you most like the Capetonians to know about your school experiences?

-Do you have any photographs, documents or heirlooms that you would like to share with me?

## **B. Interview instrument with educators**

The purpose of interviewing educators was to establish the kinds of practices and pedagogies and viewpoints that were prevalent at Victoria High School between 1968 and 1990 and how these were understood and became embedded within the thinking and the lives of educators and students at the school in that period.

Some of the questions that I will focus on asking educators will be related to when they started teaching at the school, how many years of experience they have, whether they are still teaching, when some of them retired, what kinds of thinking and attitudes did they bring into teaching, how this changed over time, how the school shaped their thinking and attitudes (if at all), what they remember most about their experiences of teaching at the school, what they remember about some of the students, and what they thought they were providing students in that period (and for what purpose). Some of the questions I provide below are generic questions, others are specific, and some are too open ended. I provide them here to show my interest and focus- I will expand on various questions and give them focus when preparing to interview individual educators and related to their context;

- In what year did you start teaching at Victoria High School?

- What much teaching experience did you have when you started teaching there?
- What process led to your applying and teaching here?
- What Subjects did /do you teach?
- At what year levels did you teach?
- Tell me about your teaching approach and what you tried to achieve with students
- \_ Tell me about the values and positions that informed your approach and thinking.
- Tell me about some of your experiences at the school?
- Are there any stand- out issues, developments, or people that characterise your experience at Victoria High School?
- Tell me about some of the big (and small) challenges that you encountered in your time while teaching there?-Tell me about some of your students?
- Do you think the different periods (decades) influenced the ways in which students experienced the school and learning?
- Are there any stand-out moments about students and their thinking that you would like to expand on?
- What do you think students most took away from the experience at Victoria High?
- What are some of the learning lessons that you think most students at Victoria High most valued, absorbed into their thinking and lives, and cherished?
- Do you think this applied across all students, or was it confined to a smaller group of students?
- Are there any other things that you would like to say about the school and the students in that period?
- Are there any views you would like to express about fellow educators and management staff at the school in that period?

## ADDENDUM C: STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY ETHICAL CONSENT LETTER



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

### **Approved with Stipulations**

### **New Application**

21-Jun-2013 Matope, Jasmine J

### **Proposal #: DESC\_Matope2013**

**EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES AND THE LIVES AND LEARNING OF 15 PAST  
STUDENTS THAT ATTENDED A CAPE**

**Title: TOWN HIGH SCHOOL BETWEEN 1975 AND 1990**

Dear Mrs. Jasmine Matope,

Your **New Application** received on **21-Jun-2013**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **18-Jun-2013**.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:  
Proposal Approval Period: **18-Jun-2013 -17-Jun-2014**

The following stipulations are relevant to the approval of your project and must be adhered to:

**Institutional permission required before research commence. Informed consent**

**forms:**

**1. The university logo has to appear on the top**

**2. Marlene Fouche name and contact details has to be included Tel 0218084622**

Please provide a letter of response to all the points raised IN ADDITION to HIGHLIGHTING or using the TRACK CHANGES function to indicate ALL the corrections/amendments of ALL DOCUMENTS clearly in order to allow rapid scrutiny and appraisal.

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (DESC\_Matope2013) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218839027.

**Included Documents:**

Methods – proposal; DESC form; Informed consent (2); REC Application; Permission letter; Interview schedule; Research proposal; Informed consent.

Sincerely,

Susara Oberholzer

REC Coordinator

Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

## **ADDENDUM E: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### **STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY**

#### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

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UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS

PARTICIPANTS

ETHICAL CLEARANCE: DESCRIPTION OF MY STUDY

Student: JASMINE MATOPE

Organization: UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

Study Leader: Prof A. BADROODIEN

Title: TITLE: EMBEDDED DISCOURSES IN THE LIVES AND LEARNING OF STUDENTS AT A  
COLOURED SCHOOL 1970-1990.

### **INFORMATION**

I am a full time doctoral student at Stellenbosch University and am currently conducting a study on embedded discourses in the lives and learning of past students at a school in Cape Town from 1968-1990. My aim is to examine the various ways in which these discourses filtered through and were taken up in the lives of past students. The study wants to explore how the school's context and 'ways of doing' developed the students understanding of their individual learning and experiences of schooling.

Studies that focus on schools and their past students, and especially what they supposedly 'learnt' at school, are virtually non-existent in the literature. This is mostly because very few



schools keep extensive archives, yearbooks, or records that allow for their influence to be examined in ways that say something about issues of social class and the kinds of learning that are meant to be supposedly 'embedded' within students.

My study is important as it is located within current debates and preoccupations amongst policy makers and many educationalists to 'fix' schools in lower socio-economic status (SES) areas. My key motivation to explore the subject of the thesis is to contradict, challenge, or grapple with current preoccupations amongst these individuals (policy makers, many educationalists and WCED) in using school results and performance as key criteria to understand whether a school contributes (or not) to the learning of students. They use this to justify their approaches to 'fix' schools in lower socio-economic status (SES) areas without having a fair idea of what happened within such schools in the past.

My contribution in the thesis is that there is a need to understand the learning that goes on in schools and what they have done over long periods of time to make sense of what contribution they can make to student development. Thus engaging with past students from Victoria high school will hopefully offer some important insights into how one school, reputed between 1975-1990 produced critical thinkers and influenced what the students learnt and took with them into their lives. (I have observed that the history of South Africa is such that people do not appreciate the good things that happened in the disadvantaged school during apartheid. I am interested in views of some students that attended the school and hear what they have learnt. My intention is to chart a story from one learner to the next and capture the story of not only the school but disadvantaged learners under apartheid. What I would like to do most is to simply retell from the learners' perspectives their schooling experience. No names of the participants and the school would be identified (pseudonyms would be used). It is only the learner who can identify him or herself in the story.

## **PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT**

For the Study to take place I require your consent to take part in the study.

The goal is to conduct a number of interviews with you at your place of choice.

If you are willing and concede to take part in the interviews I do promise you that none of the questions that are asked will be damaging or hurtful in anyway nor will cause you any unwarranted strain. The questions are simply meant to illicit your views on how you feel the school influenced your learning and life.

Your safety and welfare will be protected and ensured at all times. I will interview you at the times and venues appropriate to you. Interviews will be between 45-60 minutes. Prior to each interview I will email, send a message or phone you to confirm whether you are prepared, comfortable and willing to have an interview on the set time, day and venue. Also be assured that you have the right to withdraw from participating in the project at any time, whether at the beginning, middle or end of the project.

I hereby formally seek your permission to participate in my project. Your permission will allow me to interview you in relation to the study noted above, as well as to use and analyse the data that comes out of the interviews.

By asking your permission I hereby put in place a binding agreement to protect the interests and your confidentiality at all times, and to ensure that no harm comes from participating in the study. In protecting your identity, I will give you a false name, identity, or pseudonym in the study.

#### BENEFITS AND RISKS OF RESEARCH

Through the study it is hoped that an exploration of the nature and kind of aspirations of a group of past students asking what they experienced at the school and in their everyday lives that continued to hold significance later on would assist the policy makers and many educationalists to revisit the issues of 'fixing schools' and underachievement.

As noted above, I perceive no risks in your participation in the study as the questions are of a general nature. I would like to include you \_\_\_\_\_ in the study given that you have displayed interest in speaking about this topic.

#### PROCEDURE

1. I require your consent, as a participant
2. In doing so, I declare that you will be fully protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm that may be related to the study.
3. All information I glean from you will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and respect.
4. When I refer to any detail about you in the study I will at all times use a pseudonym, so that no information or opinion in the study can be directly linked to you.
5. The interviews will be taped, but no one on the tape will be identified by name. All transcripts will be verified with you and then stored in a safe and locked place at home.
6. Nobody else, not even my supervisor will have access to the tapes or data at any time.
7. All documentation and data will be kept in a safe or locked facility at my home and will be destroyed upon completion of my thesis.

#### PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You have the right to decide whether to participate in the study or not. Even if you accept to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time whatsoever from the project. You may decide to decline to answer some of the questions during the interview process and still remain in the study.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please feel free to contact me at 071 906 9723 or my supervisor, Dr. Badroodien at 021-808 2263.

#### BENEFITS/REIMBURSEMENTS

No benefits or incentives will be provided to any party partaking in this research.

#### IN GIVING MY CONSENT, I NOTE THAT

1. I have read the "Participant Information Sheet" and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained. I understand and agree to give my consent/ take part.
2. I understand the purpose of the research project and my/my child's involvement in it, including potential harms and/or benefits.
3. I understand that I/my child may withdraw from the research project at any stage whatsoever, should I/my child wish to do so.
4. I understand that the interview will be audiotaped and that data will be collected and stored in a safe place.
5. I understand that no incentive(s) will be provided.
6. I understand that should I require any further information about the research, or if I wish to make a complaint relating to my/my child's involvement in the research, that I may contact the university's research ethics committee via Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development.
7. I understand that my signature and that of my child (here below) will indicate my consent that he/she volunteer as a participant; that our questions have been answered satisfactorily; and that the information above is understood.
8. A copy of this form will be provided to you.
9. Your signature below means that you freely consent that your child participate in the research project.

## INFORMED CONSENT SLIP

I agree to participate in the semi-structured interview. I understand the purpose of the study and have been informed of all implications and procedures.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

RESEARCHER: JASMINE MATOPE

SIDNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_